







INEZ

The RADICAL

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"BY BREAD ALONE"



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TO
MY SISTER EMMA



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BOOK ONE

CHAPTER I

A TRIBUTE TO BRAINS

AT bottom the display of wealth is as un-American as the flaunting of a title and its accompanying coat of arms. At any rate, one might so have believed from the exclamations leveled by the friends of the "Butcher Boy," a cosmopolitan if not an exclusive legion, against that plutocratic corner in the drab, plebeian hall made both pecuniarily conspicuous and respectable by silks, ostrich feathers, jewels, dress suits, and lorgnettes.

But we are called to attend that most characteristic of American institutions, a political meeting, and not to listen to wide-of-the-mark deductions; therefore, let us delay no longer the fat chairman, toying with his gavel and establishing a formal acquaintance between his nervous fingers and the gelid pitcher of water. From the depths of his great stomach, shaped in its shapelessness like a wine bag of the Orientals, comes a ridiculously still, small voice that says:

"Ladies and Gentlemen: It is now my duty—nay, my pleasure—to introduce to you—nay, to present to you, for who does not know him?—that brilliant, capable, and eloquent young gentleman, Mr. Addison Hammersmith, who has already shed so much luster on the honored name of his family, who has refused to let luxury put fetters on his talents, who——"

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"Don't be kapin' us here all evenin' wid yer 'whos'!" called an American wit, evidently of Celtic origin, whose name, alas! has not escaped oblivion.

"Shut up! Let the man finish!" cried that lover of fair play who can be found in any American assembly, eager to use his fist or his tongue on the side that gives him the better chance.

"Hurrah for the chairman! There's no fat on his brain, anyway! Give him the glad hand!" bawled a true patron of native eloquence, jumping to his feet.

The pot-bellied chairman, turning turkey-red as if in modest acknowledgment of the compliments hurled at him, rapped for quiet in order that the rest of his remarks might be heard, which goes to show his modesty was both premature and affected. A policeman, whose sincere efforts to maintain quiet were due merely to the fact that he was paid for the purpose, hastened toward the quarter of the hall where the militant friends of brain were seated in general and the friend of eloquence in particular.

The large audience arose as one from its seats to watch the fun. It had feared it would be enlightened only, but now that the entertainment of a fight was to be thrown into the bargain, it ceased to be bored and became jubilant. Above the catcalls, the stamping of feet, the whistling and shrieking, our patron of eloquence declaimed with all the fervor due the art he so admired:

"I tell you it wasn't me! I ain't a-going to get out fer no cop! This is a free country!"

This appeal for the preservation of American institutions at once brought forth hearty acclamation from upholders of the principles of the fathers—a Pole, a Swede, a Bohemian, and a Russian Jew. "We'll stand by you, O'Rourke!" "Hit him back!" "Grab his club away!"

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and so saying they rushed forward to put themselves between the cop and his victim on whose head something harder than a hand in benediction threatened to fall.

And now, O ye sons of American liberty, forward and to the rescue! Listen to the vibrant voices of the brawny defenders of brain and economic equality! "Put the cop out!" "McAllister's friends to the front!" "This is a trick of the rich guys!"

Up and down go chairs and heads, bodies jam and crush forward, fisticuffs threaten and the friends of brain promise to invade the far-off exclusive corner occupied by mere lucre, craning its hydra head to see, when two more myrmidons ascend as out of a trap door from the saloon below and restore order.

A body, doubtlessly the valuable though not negotiable property of the aforesaid patron of oratory, was heard to roll and crash down the stairs, and the voice of its owner, as if to exhaust the possibilities of so dramatic an exit shouted: "They didn't put me out, by God! No, by God, they didn't put me out!"

The whole gathering, aristocratic as well as plebeian, was doubled up with laughter over the paradoxical situation of a man who declared he was still in his seat when circumstantial evidence so unmistakably showed that he was rolling down the stairs with more regard to speed than dignity. Humor is ever the great American leveler, laughter makes us forgetful of class—for a second or two.

But in this chorus one man joined not, and the striking exception was none other than that worthy and ingenuous young gentleman, Mr. Addison Hammersmith, whose virtues the chairman has already trumpeted, so there is no need of recording them again with our lesser instrument. It was not because Addison Hammersmith was such a serious mor-

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tal that he frowned down on this exhibition of frivolity, but rather because he was too frightened to know what was going on anywhere save in his own mind. Candidate for alderman on the Republican ticket, it was Addison's first appearance in public; and all of us who have gone through a similar ordeal know that the resultant sensation is different than that obtained by striking our funny bone.

Addison's audience was composed of Poles, Irish, Bohemians, Hungarians, Swedes, Croatians, Italians and Russian Jews, who had come from the "wrong end" of the ward to hear the joint debate between him and his rival on the Democratic ticket, one Bruce McAllister, bearer of the savory cognomen Butcher Boy. Many of these scarcely could understand English, and most of them had just as much interest in the theme of discussion as they would have had in two different solutions of the same problem in differential calculus. What they wanted was to see the Butcher Boy worst the gilded youth. They were willing to bet odds that he could, and what was more, if he didn't, they would, even if they had to toss a cop or two over the gallery to do it.

Now since the aristocratic Addison despised all these people as being mongrel and low-bred foreigners, one wonders why he cared whether his speech oozed, as it threatened to do, through his finger tips or spouted with fine rapture from his throat. But human nature is inconsistent, and it may be said that the people whose good opinion we crave most are often those we most dislike.

Moreover, there sat beside Addison on the platform the Republican mayor and several other city dignitaries, Addison's father, a florid bewhiskered old gentleman; his mother, who was quite beautiful with her young face and silver hair, and his sister Inez who was still more beautiful. On all of these as well as on the occupants of the aristocratic

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corner Addison was eager to make a good impression, above everything he hated to make a fool of himself before his father, and thereby justify the opinion that gentleman had expressed about his son on sundry occasions; nor did he want to disappoint his mother and sister, who kept predicting a career for him.

"Don't be nervous, Addison," whispered his mother, which was quite as practical in the way of advice as if she had bade him cease to be Addison.

"Speak as if you were in the music room talking to me," encouraged Inez Hammersmith—which would have been excellent counsel could she have transported him home to have administered it.

Addison frowned; a trifle annoyed that his mother and sister, even though they had written his speech for him, should conduct themselves as if upon him did not devolve the entire fearful responsibility of delivering it. They were unmindful, perhaps a little ungrateful for the effort he was making for the glory of the family.

On such dark reflections as these, broke the droning voice of the chairman, bubbling indistinctly from the shapeless depths of him:

"Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Addison Hammersmith himself will now address you." His voice died away like the whir of a clock that has taxed all but the extreme end of its tightly wound spring.

Mr. Addison Hammersmith himself was feeling very much like a man who looks upon death as inevitable and unavoidable and therefore never worries about it until the pallid phantom has him by the collar. His heart performed a remarkable physiological feat—dropping to the bottom of his shoes; and a force that Addison had never read about in his study of physics, which was profound, pulled him back

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on his chair when he attempted to arise. Another force, equally unknown, dragged him off his feet and whisked him, trembling before its awful power, in front of the speakers' table. It was all in all an heroic achievement that called forth the unstinted applause of Buck O'Brien's claqueurs, each of whom would have been blotted in dishonor from the city's pay roll if he had let escape the dramatic moment.

Addison's round little form bowed from left to right with all the spontaneity of an automaton, the tints of his straw-colored hair and his pink cheeks seeming to change as he did so. Something whirled around in the inside of his head that resembled a pyrotechnic wheel in shape and garish lucidity, and he could no more stop it than turn the night into day. That wheel being nothing else than his speech you will understand his desire to bring it to a halt, and force it to do the service for which it was intended. His ineffectual attempt to hold even a spoke made his arms and legs as shaky as if they were entangled in the hub of a wheel more actual and less metaphorical.

"Don't be afraid, mamma is with you!" bellowed another inglorious but unfortunately not mute friend of brain.

"Shut up; give custard pie a show!" howled another, anxious to prove that victorious brain could be magnanimous to filthy lucre in defeat.

Laughter let go both its sides, but the ominous thwack of a policeman's club hitting forth indiscriminately taught it the wisdom if not the comfort of squeezing its diaphragm. The hall settled down to a quiet like that of sleeping fields, snow covered. Fortunately for Addison he was so perturbed by what was going on inside of him—accredit him at least with rare presence of mind!—that he heard naught of what was going on outside of him, and these last two supreme

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shafts of wit flew as far over his head as if they had not been aimed at his ears.

Finally the mother, perceiving what was amiss, leaned far forward and whispered to him the first sentence of his speech; and by dint of logic, memory and intelligence—he had rehearsed the thing at least ten times—he was able to reconstruct paragraph after paragraph, and so reach the middle. The hall not being particularly interested and being prohibited from openly expressing its disapproval, went to sleep. The reporter of the *Republican* wrote in his “story” that Addison’s voice had a certain soothing quality, and since the scribe slumbered away with the other auditors he certainly knew whereof he spoke and must therefore pass as an accurate observer.

All went well enough for a while until Addison reached that passage of his speech wherein he said: “Fellow-citizens, the fantastic arguments of those who purport to defend municipal ownership have now been demolished.” For here it was that a stanch partisan of McAllister’s, fearful for the fate of his leader, shouted over the rim of the gallery: “No, they ain’t been smashed, neither! Wait until the Butcher Boy’s turn comes. He’ll make mince meat out of you!” This gallery god, like many another false god before him, received homage altogether beyond the value of his service to a credulous mankind, and poor Addison was so taken aback by the threat and the response it awakened that he forgot his lines and stammered and stumbled until his mother came to his assistance once more. The incident may prove that as no mortal should be deemed lucky until dead so no orator should be considered safe until seated.

However, the last of his oration must have been a wonderful performance, for his best friends had to admit that the first of it was a little below mediocrity, and there must have

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been some part of it on which the truthful and observing representative of the *Republican* based his glowing description of Addison's forensic powers.

"Attractive in appearance, easy in manner, with a vocabulary at once flexible and admirably fitted to his deep and varied emotions, with a delivery, which if not exactly Websterian, still——" but why quote the scribe at length when the Hon. Buck O'Brien, rushing on the platform the moment his candidate was seated, and slapping him enthusiastically on the back, summed up the situation in the terse phrase or two: "You done well, little Hammersmith! Yer ma kin be proud of you! You done mighty well! You done noble!"

CHAPTER II

A DANGEROUS MAN

LADIES and gentlemen: It's now my pleasure to introduce to you Mr. Bruce McAllister, a man who——"
"Hurrah for McAllister!" "Give it to him!"
"Deliver the meat now, Bruce!" "Down with the swell guy!"

The uproar was a serviceable lesson in dramatic arrangement to the unpracticed chairman; namely, to draw his speech to a close, not to start it with a climax; for it was as useless as impossible to continue now.

At the remote end of the platform the archtype of brains lifted his six feet and one inch of bone and muscle from his chair and walked slowly toward the speakers' table. The long tails of his frock coat—proper garment for the avowed friend of the common people—flapped around his knees and made his walk seem more awkward than it really was.

"How ugly he is!" thought the fair Inez, while the applause and the huzzaing swelled to a size befitting the apotheosis of intellect. Fastidiousness was her photographer, and he accentuated that long gaunt figure and threw into bold relief that swarthy face, with its crowning mop of black hair, the ridiculously big ears, the slightly protruding underlip, the long mouth and the nose. "I declare," she whispered to Addison, giving her impression of the picture, "he

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is the most baggy man I ever knew. His trousers bag at the knees, his thick black hair bags on his head, his ears bag at the sides, and his nose bags on his face!"

Addison whose taste was more charitable if not so nice, frowned and shook his straw-colored head in reply.

The Butcher Boy stood there in quiet, his thin shoulders stooped, leaning his decentralized weight on his left foot; and a broad good-natured grin, in full appreciation of his popularity, stretched the thin lips of his big mouth to their full length. Admiration swelled to thunder. He pushed obtruding locks of his black hair away from his swarthy face and sobered with the responsibility of so much veneration, studied the individual countenances that made up the throng that had come to worship at his shrine.

He lifted himself to his full, towerlike height, and his round shoulders were thrown back straight and level. He raised his long arm and stretched out a commanding forefinger. The gesture sent his coat sleeves ludicrously far back on his thin wrists and twisted his collar askew. The aristocratic section indulged in a well-bred smile; the rest of the hall could have vied in demeanor with Mrs. Hammersmith's drawing-room. All that could be heard was its heavy breathing, and we believe that no book on etiquette puts its ban on breathing or commands its readers under any circumstances, save when they attend their own funerals, to hold their breath.

The audience, Inez perceived, belonged to Bruce McAlister in the sense that her spirited cob belonged to her when she held the guiding rein, and she wondered which way the odd creature would head the hall. The odd creature sloughed off his oddity at once and lapsed into conventionality by relating a humorous story, without which no American may approach a serious duty. Inez laughed, although

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she had determined that she wouldn't, not because the question of debate was in any way sacred to her and she resented a joke being cracked in its presence, but because she had made up her mind that she was going to sit in judgment on him and not be carried away with him as the rest of his listeners so evidently were.

His good nature was contagious; she felt its irresistibility. It bubbled over like the water of a fall; it cheered you like sunshine on a spring morning; its warmth included you as insidiously and surely as the shadows of noontide do the hot fields over which they creep. Where was the sense of resisting him? Why put oneself at odds with him? Then came a second story and she laughed as heartily as anybody, in a way that surprised Addison and her mother who always had believed her coldly self-contained. "Ah, well," thought she, "he is only a jester, anyway, and——"

Before she had finished that reflection Bruce McAllister was engaged in seriously demolishing Addison Hammer-smith's arguments, and since Inez herself had some slight hand in their construction she was naturally interested in watching them fly to pieces. She had thought them pillars of marble; he proved them mere ornaments of stucco.

The shrill, high note in his voice had grated on her nice ear when he started, but as he waxed more and more serious and his swarthy face graver, his tones became rich, full, and round. He passed on from one subject to another. His discourse was less like a river that makes for a certain direction than a lake that follows no definite line but whose waters moving everywhere compel admiration by their clearness, their depth, their freshness. Traction concerned him not particularly; he used it merely as a convenience wherefrom to survey the greater problem of this problem-ridden generation.

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"He's ambitious," thought Inez, "he's after a higher office." And so he was. Her conclusion was a tacit admission that she saw in him a man born to the purple. It did credit to her insight.

Street cars were not the only thing that had been taken from his people, he said, and they would not be the only thing restored them. "To them from whom has been stolen shall it be returned tenfold," seemed not only his fantastic writ but his quack remedy. Again, who were "his people"?

They were the poor and the lowly and the foreign—those who toiled and spun during their youth and in their old age were neither fed by the fruits of their labor nor warmed by the fabrics of their spinning.

His people were those who built the mansions of the rich and closed their eyes in the squalid hovels of mean streets.

His people were those who had lost merely because they never were allowed to enter the race of life.

His people were those who did the work of the world and stood by with hungry eyes while the mighty reaped the profits therefrom.

His people were the voice of the city sobbing out at night when stricken low by hunger and cold, by exhaustion and heat. The voice hung like an echo over the ruins of vanished civilizations, threatening the downfall of the new governments that blindly refused to give it heed.

His own voice throbbed as he spoke; there was a tear in it. His audience became a single individual and in that amalgam of Pole, Swede, Russian Jew, Croat, Irishman, Hungarian, what not, the aristocratic Inez Hammersmith, no longer able to hold herself disdainfully aloof, mingled and lost herself.

He hammered his remarks, as it were, into the brains of his listeners by the most awkward of gestures, the swinging

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overhead of his two long arms; and then, before one was aware of the awkwardness of it, the long arms were hanging down at his sides and the golden voice carried one on and on. Who notices the foam flecks in a swift river that forces one with alarming rapidity away from the hospitality of its shores?

Inez Hammersmith toyed absently with her pearl necklace—perhaps, as women will in moments of emotional and religious exaltation, she would have torn it from her throat and flung it before the altar of this high priest of poverty—but he made no demand for revenue; at least not directly. Then detaching herself from this unit, she became herself and curled a scornful underlip. “Demagogue! Master of every rhetorical trick! Charlatan, just cunning enough to know how to stir the basest passions of the mob!”

But the voice, regardless of her opinions, surged upward, touching greater heights as it rose from the seemingly soundless depths of him. It entered the skies and called upon the gods to look down on the sufferings of his people, prostrated now by the hard times that swept like a blight over the land. His swarthy face was woefully solemn, the lines in it became deep and rigid, as if cut out of marble instead of impressed on human flesh. He was evidently a man of many sorrows, who, like Savonarola and Dante, had made the acquaintance of grief and knew all its bitterness, and like theirs his face was coarse, heavy, ugly of feature.

For a second his melancholy made its appeal to her, although she herself was not aware what it was that won for the moment her intellectual sympathy. But again she cut herself adrift. “Demagogue, anyway!” she pronounced, this time with fist clenched.

And yet there was that voice, sensible as his swarthy, coarse-featured face, to be reckoned with. How rich, how

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full, how golden it was! With how little effort did he make it pour and pour and pour from him! It was a voice fit for a singer of sublime music, not meant for mobs put together of the riff-raff of all nations, suited to commune in lonely places with the serene stars on the mountaintops. Such voices she adored—as who does not?—and she felt the pity of its having been given him to debase to the purposes of the mean demagogue.

He paid his undesirable respects to the idle and luxurious rich. “They are lilies,” he said, “and the poor are the soil out of which these beautiful flowers spring. Consider the soil; the more beautiful these lilies grow the more exhausted it becomes. What pleasure or profit has the soil from its labors, do not even the very lilies that it bears despise the grime and blackness that have brought them forth? The white hands of the human lily,” ran the last words of his homily, “are a disgrace to it; they tell of rougher hands made blood red that theirs may remain lily white.”

Inez was a little more at ease because her own hands were gloved and hidden from view, and she was sensible of blushing, although there was nothing to show a change of color. Then she felt a glow of resentment, of anger at the presumption of this fellow in lecturing her, but she was still conscious amid her provocation that there was nothing personal in what he said, that he seemed to be addressing the world at large, and her in particular only because she formed a part of the world he addressed.

A tornado of applause swept her out of her self-absorption and back to a consciousness of her unwonted environment, advising her most abruptly that he had done. The mighty shouts of “Hurrah for the Butcher Boy!” “Good for you, Bruce!” “You didn’t do a thing to the rich guy; oh, no!” shocked her sense of the fitness of things, as if she herself

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had elevated him to a place where the cries of this mob could not penetrate. Then she was thankful to the *hoi polloi* for restoring her to herself and fixing her relationship to the outside universe.

"A dangerous man," she repeated, to convince herself of the truth and the justice of this judgment as she watched him retreat to his inconspicuous corner, his glittering blue-gray eyes bent on the floor as he mopped his brow.

And dangerous he was without a doubt; but dangerous to what and to whom?

CHAPTER III

A FALL FROM GRACE

INEZ was acknowledging with a bow and a smile Addison's introduction of his swarthy rival, towering above her almost a half head. Inez herself just missed being too tall. He was sensible of her beauty, of the regular face with its finely chiseled features, of the robust form, of the solid flesh and the vigorous muscles that made themselves felt even under the folds of her gown and her furs, of the radiant health that traced pink tints in her white-as-ivory cheeks. Her chest was as ample, as well developed as a singer's, and her shoulders and back seemed as strong as a man's, yet their finely feminine lines carried with them no suggestion of masculinity. "Beautiful, but cold as ice," was his first thought; to which after a swiftly inquiring glance at her large brown eyes he added, "More brain than Addison, but less heart."

"How very ugly he is," she thought, her mind wandering between the praise and the blame she wished to mete out; and her indecision gave her the sensation of being on the less comfortable end of the see-saw. She was conscious of his sharp, glittering, blue-gray eyes feeling their way through the back of her head, and she was sure that his baffling smile bespoke his amusement at catching her in a position so undignified. A conventional phrase brought her feet in contact with the earth. A phrase, equally conventional came from him, and so they teeter-tottered for a while, arriving nowhere.

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He seemed more troubled than embarrassed in his awkward way, as if he wished to escape the irksomeness of a formal conversation. She observed that his eyes were heavy, and his voice husky, as if he had expended every particle of his energy, and as if he had squandered all the force of his soul on his oration. A few minutes later he swung his hat in a semicircle, bowed and retired. When Inez entered the carriage to drive home she noticed him and his host of camp-followers enter the saloon under the hall. According to her knowledge and estimate of such things it was a low and vulgar resort and her underlip curled contemptuously. It was as if some star to which she had been attracted for a second's consideration had shot from the unsmirched skies and dropped into the mud.

There was, however, a certain indecision in Bruce's step, a certain reluctance in his movement that, observing though she was, escaped her altogether. Good nature, tired nerves crying out for relaxation, the jubilation of his friends, lifted him over the bars erected by his better judgment. For him to enter any saloon was to give hostages to the evil genius that presided over it. It was to match his weaker strength with the terrible temptation from which he had been fleeing.

His father, Andrew McAllister, a Scotch-Irish lawyer, celebrated in the annals of Illinois in the time of Lincoln, nourished a love for the whiskies of both countries that argued a perfect impartiality for his ancestry. Whisky gradually enticed Andrew from eminence to penury and then dragged him into a drunkard's grave. Bruce inherited his father's eloquence and with it the desire for the liquor, we are told, that heats its cockrels to inspiration. Between him and the glass, however, stood the apparition, seen so often in his boyhood, of his drunken father lifting a hand to strike his white-haired mother. Often and often he had sat with

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her through the watches of the night in wait for his dissolute sire. Often he had trembled like a string suddenly broken when his father entered and staggered by his broken-hearted wife murmuring gently, "Andy! O Andy!"

Moreover, Andrew McAllister had left Bruce at the age of sixteen to see to it that the family kept out of the poor house, and the responsibilities of the inheritance were conducive to sobriety. Politics, even in his boyhood, had struck Bruce as the easiest way to lift himself and the family out of the pit; but the wonder was, its associations considered, that it did not drag the boy under the slime that paves it. He slipped in that ooze and filth more than once, staggered to his feet and mounted again; for his gaze was lifted upward ever, and inward voices, impossible to sully or silence, called him to the stars. One of these voices belonged to ambition, to all that concerned the immediate selfish interests of Bruce McAllister; another of these voices belonged to his people—the people of the pit with whom the lot of his boyhood had been cast and his youth and early manhood passed, who called on him to lift them as he rose. These two voices commingled strangely, often becoming as one, and if he had one eye open for the fortunes of Bruce McAllister the other was never shut on what he dignified by the name of "The Cause."

However, there were forces outside of him that sang in unison with the voices that stirred within. His widowed mother, silver-haired, self-sacrificing, encouraged him with a smile and chastised him with a tear; his sister Elaine, kind, lovable and firm, scolded him, and his better balanced though younger brother, Peter, pointed the road by sane and sensible example. The boy and the young man had soiled his hands with the slime-covered gold that finds its way into politics; he had grafted with the worst and best of them; he had gam-

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bled heavily, following the dictates of a naturally superstitious nature; he had on one or two occasions threatened to go to pieces morally by overindulgence in liquor, and yet his trend was upward, spiralwise, dipping downward here and there, but mounting ever, ever mounting. Conscience castigated him after each relapse, goading him onward; and the sensitiveness of his conscience developed with the growth of the man. The immortal, inextinguishable spark in him threw its ray of light across the blackness of the pit and pointed the way out.

Even his selfishness was not of the lowest sort and what had come to him in the way of graft went out, unknown to them, to pay for Elaine's lessons at the Art Institute, or Peter's lessons in one of the night schools devoted to the sciences. He was the head of the house, and a born dreamer, he advanced its material fortunes merely because the sternest of life's realities forced him into practicability. His dreams were still his—a precious possession that he kept buried in the privacy of his own heart and drew forth to admire after the work of the day. His dreams, to shift metaphors, were the haven into which he hoped to anchor his ship at last, making the long hard cruise over the waters of practicability worth the while.

Meanwhile, in Gravenheim's saloon there is going on the little comedy-drama in which our hero has chosen against his better judgment to play a part. Hands from every direction shot out toward him the moment he crossed the threshold and the cry of "What's the matter with McAllister!" and its inevitable answer made the huge beer steins back of the bar rattle. Invitations to drink were so numerous that to refuse them exhausted both his diplomacy and his voice. He sought refuge in cigars, lighting a long black one, sticking the rest in his pockets.

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"Well, Bruce," shouted one Skaprowski, "you done that little —— up. He won't trouble you no more this campaign."

The hero of the hour and the place nodded, twirling his cigar in his mouth and giving no answer. The warm atmosphere—it was raw and cold outside—the electric lights, the garish decorations (his taste was of the crudest) set up a train of expansive feelings in Bruce's heart and made him doubly kind toward that little parasitic world that was feeling so kind toward him. His tired nerves were relaxing, calling for greater stimulus to wind them again. He longed for a drink, and literally speaking he was for turning his back on the longing. Already he had removed his foot from the rail that ran along the base of the bar and faced around, when temptation personified in the capacious bulk of Buck O'Brien, leader of the Republican forces, approached him. Buck was inimical to Bruce only in his public life and capacity; privately speaking he loved him.

"'Twas a foine spache ye made, Bruce," opined the critical Buck. "Damn me, if I didn't have half a moind ter belave what ye said whilst ye was a-saying av it."

"Like the old lady," laughed Bruce, "who said she wouldn't believe she was deaf only she couldn't hear."

"But did ye belave it yerself, Bruce?"

"A reasonable amount of it," returned Bruce, a smile that might have meant anything wavering across his swarthy face.

"Good! Will ye have somethin'?"

Our hero hesitated. "Well, I'll take a seltzer and lemon."

"It's the mugwump av drinks, Bruce."

"Mugwumpism does well enough while you are making up your mind."

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The crowd of satellites pressed close to these two supreme planets of their small political world to catch what light and heat they might choose to dispense. Buck told a story; Bruce followed him, setting the saloon in a roar with another and another. Some generous patron of pure music dropped a dime in the slot of the automatic harp and the muses rewarded him in the shape of "A Hot Time in the Old Town To-night!" The ballad had the stamp of our hero's approval—nicest of musical critics, he! And he added another bay to the composer's wreath by shouting with the chorus. Corks popped; bottles opened. A livelier note had been struck and the saloon quickened its tempo accordingly.

Bricktop Anderson—the terrible Swede—Bruce's lieutenant in the old days—swept the center with a buck-and-wing dance to the accompaniment on the piano of one Larry Kieff. Bruce, his cigar half swallowed, his hat pushed far back, beat time with his long, spiderlike legs and arms, and he seemed mad enough to be under a certain dervishlike inspiration.

He was himself in his own Denmark. His nerves eased. He reached back on the bar for his seltzer and lemon for which a friend from the ward had substituted whisky. Half absently Bruce, his eyes on Bricktop finishing with a flourish, lifted the glass to his lips, and his nostrils expanded as his lips tasted. He gulped the fire down; its warmth set each red corpuscle in his blood to dancing swifter than Bricktop's legs.

"Have anither, Bruce?"

"It's on me! Everybody line up!" The great man's purse leapt out with his own words.

"Holy High Jinks, Bruce, lay hold of yourself and don't go crazy!" So, entering the saloon, speaks Edward Donovan Butler, better known as "Little Butler," which was a

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popular tribute paid to his size. Butler—in such guises does Virtue speaking to Temptation come—was political reporter for the *Democrat* and a one time law partner of Bruce McAllister. Out of the pit had they scrambled together, and although their professions had parted, their sentiments and their hearts still battled on side by side for the same cause.

“Glad you came, Ed; you’re in time to join the bunch.” Bruce grinned down on the blithe little reporter whose face looked as if it had been made by an avalanche rolling from the top of his large head, pulling his forehead, his long nose, and his long chin and jaw down with it in the process of rolling.

With a generosity that became greatness he tossed a bill on the bar. His Satanic majesty was having an easier time of it with Bruce, despite the presence of Virtue scowling and protesting there, than he had had for many a long day. Corks popped; bottles opened, and to such music the hero as soloist sings, a little more automatic if less musical than the harp, “There’ll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight.” His audience, sport, grafter, rascal, petty politician, drunkard and genuine good fellow, commends his versatility. “By God, it ain’t often a feller kin spout and sing too.” “Ain’t McAllister a wonder?” Answer echo: “I should say he is a wonder.”

The more Bruce drinks the louder he sings. The crowd, always a hero worshipper, takes its cue from the leaders and the noise is raised to such a pitch that the police enter to command quiet, but seeing that the disturbers are politicians they interfere not. Are Jove and the gods drinking nectar to be interrupted by insignificant myrmidons whom they themselves have put in this lower sphere of power?

Bricktop dances audaciously; the leviathan O’Brien imitates him, which transforms clumsiness into humor; and he

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tumbles on the floor, which transforms humor into a frenzy! It was the signal—and what was not—for more corks to pop out of more bottles. The friend of the people, quite responsive now to Satan's beck, filled his glass again and again, and passed into his power. He becomes a sort of dilettante Faust, of which this world is so full, who signs his soul away for a night's enjoyment in its Protean shapes. On the morrow, never fear, these sinners will bend their eyes toward the gods, the better, they think, for having met evil face to face, pitied, endured but refused to embrace.

The music and dancing quickened, the drinking tried to keep pace with both, and none knows whether or not the stars would have seen the end of the bout if Bricktop Anderson had not suggested that there was to be a cock fight way over in the Northwest side. Drink is usually but a prelude to the play, the means to an end; here was a proper end and the crowd's sporting blood was up. It would have bet on anything that had two sides and they declared for Bricktop's idea. Cabs were hailed; and in the first of these chariots, his hat far to one side, his head far to another, his vest open, ridiculing Virtue's voice protesting still, sat the man capable of transporting audiences to the empyrean.

The simple home of the McAllister family invites us next. Concerning its interior we pause merely long enough to remark that all the evidences of refinement are due to the artistic hand of Elaine McAllister. The taste of Bruce, as has been hinted before, is no optimistic argument for the part that art some day may play in the so-called coming democracy.

Delicate, small featured, esthetic, one would have found it hard to believe that Elaine was Bruce's sister, but nature is no less fond of putting entirely different persons in the same family than of putting opposite qualities in the same

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heart. We may gaze on that pale face as long as we will, studying it to our heart's content as she lies there fast asleep on the lounge in the sitting room, a light red woolen coverlet thrown across her shoulders. On the floor is the book that has slipped out of her hand—we take care not to mention its title lest it be believed that professional jealousy induces us to charge, by innuendo, that a fellow-author is a soporific.

Moreover, justice compels us to say that it was the long vigil of the night and not the book that was responsible for her slumber. She had been sitting up for hours with the invalid mother, waiting for the head of the family to put in his appearance and announce how he had covered himself with glory by putting his enemy to oratorical flight. Peter McAllister—like the rest of the world we may hear from him later on—had sought his couch, worn out from his toil of the day as chemist in the “Yards” and by the original research work he had done that night. Peter was either too indifferent to care whether Bruce had disarmed his adversary in this trial by words, or his faith may have been too great to have admitted of any doubt.

The stars were growing pale in the skies when the chariot that bore our hero drove to the house. He staggered toward the door with an indirection that made walking a more complicated than pleasing art. His search for his key was an acrobatic performance, and although he did not succeed in finding it, he had the satisfaction of twisting himself into every possible combination that his bones and muscles were capable of forming, and meanwhile he made noise enough to have accompanied the storming of a fort, let alone the opening of a door.

Mrs. McAllister, barely dozing in her restless fashion, was aroused by the disturbance and sat upright in her bed to

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determine its cause. Neither Peter nor Elaine proving at all responsive to it and not wishing to awaken either of them from their sound slumbers—trust an invalid mother to pay deference to nature's best gift of health!—she dragged herself out of her bed and to the door that stood as a stone wall before the triumphant march of the all-conquering Bruce.

"Damn door 'ith a wall—have it changed to-morrow," he hicked, proud of his discernment, as he rolled between the two walls of the narrow hall and through the door on the right-hand side into the parlor. Mrs. McAllister put the night lamp on the marble-topped table and sank back into a rocking chair, breathing heavily. Bruce looked at his invalid mother, bewildered. He dropped his crushed hat on the floor and rubbed a questioning palm over his hot head. Then he arose and stood as if petrified, fastening his bleary eyes on that dear face, wasted and thin.

"Andy, O Andy!" murmured Mrs. McAllister in mild expostulation, as if her dead husband had come to life again and was standing there before her, intoxicated. The condition of Bruce had pushed her, like a blow, to the verge of the delirious.

Bruce was shocked into sobriety. It was as if he had become a child again, clinging to his mother's hand on the occasion of one of his father's dreadful homecomings. Had he stepped into Andrew McAllister's shoes merely to prolong his mother's insufferable torture? He burst into tears, and falling down on his knees before her, buried his head in her lap, while her pitying, gentle, forgiving hands stroked his coarse, black hair.

"Mother," he moaned, "forgive me if you can; for God's sake, try to forgive me! I'll never drink another drop of liquor in all my life again."

He kept his word.

CHAPTER IV

THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF ADDISON HAMMERSMITH

BRAINS were defeated by money in the competition for a seat in the city council. This, say some, proves the wisdom of destiny; otherwise brains would have found themselves forlorn among strangers and snubbed. Half-a-dozen causes, foremost of which stood Bruce McAllister's fantastic radicalism and the influence of Addison Hammersmith's family, were responsible for our hero's defeat, but being interested in his net results and not in contributory causes, we pass them by.

Bruce took his defeat philosophically; he believed in his star, and its temporary obscurity meant nothing—a ray of light more or less—in the final blaze of glory which was to illumine him. One sees the value of every young man's choosing a star; whether or not it will let him hitch his wagon to it is another question.

Elaine, who was punctilious, insisted that her brother call on Addison and congratulate him on his victory, and Bruce acquiesced with a surprising alacrity; the reason for it being that he wished to do so, anyway, for Addison and he had been schoolmates. Bruce McAllister and Addison Hammersmith met for the first time in the evening law school that both attended. Class politics made them fair friends, for when Bruce ran for president of the debating club he arranged a

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deal whereby Addison, who was popular on account of his good nature, was to run for the position of vice-president. Addison, who was not a born politician by any means, always felt that he was indebted to Bruce for this honor, not seeing that the lending of his name to the ticket put Bruce in his debt. Beyond this, however, they had been on the same side of debate often enough, and Bruce's suggestions and his more direct aid had helped Addison to appear to advantage and to make a good impression; so Addison admired Bruce for his kindness and his talents, although he considered him uncouth and even downright vulgar.

They were just as opposite as any two people on earth could be, but despite that fact they might have been the warmest friends in the world if Bruce had not held himself aloof and looked askance at the advances that Addison made in his kind-hearted manner; for the truth is that Bruce McAllister was far more prejudiced against Addison on account of that ingenuous youth's aristocratic bearing and his wealth than Addison was against Bruce on account of his pronounced faults and his poverty. When Addison heard Bruce hold forth in the debating club on the themes nearest and dearest to his heart, when he listened to Bruce's copious flow of words and ideas, he forgot all about Bruce's shortcomings and he was proud of his acquaintance. He gazed at him in admiration and he wished to heaven that his natural gifts had been one half—no by thunder, as he told all the fellows, one hundredth as great. Bruce was not so broad of mind and he was blind to many of the virtues shining so openly on the cloth of gold that covered Addison's really warm and generous heart.

"Come to see me, McAllister, old chap," he would say in his bluff, but finely mannered way; "come to see me any time. I'll make you welcome as can be."

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"Yes, I will," Bruce would answer, but he never came, and as even those answers were rather curt, Addison felt that his hospitality was poorly rewarded, and he gave it all over, thinking Bruce more or less a cad, which, according to your point of view, was more or less true.

For so young a man Addison had had a varied if not an exciting career, and his biography is perhaps humorous even though its incidents are perhaps commonplace. He had spent three years at Yale—in the freshman class—may this not show his patience? His fond mother attributed Addison's lack of progress to the obtuseness of Addison's professors rather than to her son's lack of brilliancy. Addison's brilliancy may remain to be proved; but the obtuseness of university professors——

Addison tried commerce immediately after the university was done with him, going to work in his father's immense hardware store; but his natural inclination was not for a business life, and he gave it up after a trial of three weeks, thus showing that his mind was quick to reach a conclusion. He then suggested to his father that he be sent over to Europe for a long journey to complete his education, which shows his resourcefulness; but his father insisted that the finest culture is gained from experience and hard work, and so, much against his will, Addison was forced to begin his career as a banker. He started in the humble position of collector, showing how free he was from false pride, but the cashier was unreasonable and found fault with the manner in which Addison did business; for it would seem the new employee paid nine dollars a week for cab hire—his salary was exactly five—to expedite the delivery of his collection notices; and the said cashier thought that this was setting a bad example to the other young men to whom even car-fare was a luxury. The world is unjust, and Addison, who had been endeavor-

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ing to establish a higher standard of living, was discharged for his fine efforts.

He now presented the anomaly of a man glad to lose his job. He caught a glimmer of the fascinating boulevards of Paris, of the luxurious clubs of Pall Mall, of the seven hills of Rome, but the father again pulled the curtain over that delightful picture by his commonplace views on the relation of hard work to youthful morality. Choosing at random, which shows his versatility, Addison hit on law, and in order to keep his days free he went to night school, believing, for one thing, that his father might relent if he saw him return home belated and fagged out, and that, his hard heart softening, he might send him to Europe for recuperation if not for culture; and for another thing, on looking at the subject, Addison found the entrance requirements of the night law schools were easier than those of the day institutions; which proves that Addison was easily contented. Law, after six months lost what little attraction the subject had for Addison—it rarely attracts poetical minds—and Addison took his father into his confidence and confessed that he was not of a legal bent, which led his angry senior to ask sarcastically how in the mischief he was bent, which led Addison to shrug his shoulders, which leads me to hint at his extreme modesty.

Again came the vision and the dream. O Rome! O Paris! O London! But the rhapsody died away on Addison's lips when his father grunted out that he would have to don blue overalls and roll nail-kegs across the wooden floors; for Mr. Hammersmith, Sr., believed that one ought to begin at the very bottom, while Addison held that one ought to begin at the top, which showed that the youth was ambitious. His mother, who had saved the boy from severe discipline thrice, suggested a political career, pointing out to her hus-

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band in her diplomatic manner that Addison—she took him at his word—had distinguished himself in the debating club, and that this, together with his other native talents, was bound to open a great career for him in a field where oratory counted for so much. Addison turned pale at the thought, having an inborn horror for a contact and association with low-born crowds, but between hearing his voice thunder in the halls of city councils and national and state legislatures, and hearing the thud of nail-kegs on a hard floor, he decided without any hesitation for the former, which goes to show his fine taste, his wisdom, and his obedience to his mother.

Mrs. Hammersmith was now ready for a consultation with the mayor—his wife had high social ambitions and Mrs. Hammersmith's door was at the very entrance of the royal road thereto—and that gentleman told her, with all the disinterestedness in the world, that when young men of Addison's breeding, education, and abilities were willing to enter the arena of politics to take issue with the riff-raff and the lower elements, it argued well for the future of America. He even went so far as to hint that by dint of a little maneuvering he could get her estimable son the Republican nomination for the aldermanship of his ward, which so delighted the fond mother that she immediately sent the mayor's wife an invitation for her next reception, which so delighted our good lady in turn, that she acknowledged for the first time in her life the mayoralty was good for something after all.

Thereupon, the mayor telephoned to the Right Honorable Buck O'Brien, the Republican boss, and to put the matter to you as bluntly as Buck himself put it to the mayor, there was no reason why the affair could not be fixed if Hammersmith, Sr. would come down with the coin. The amount of coin to come down was the sole bone of contention, Buck

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declaring that he knew enough to stay outside when it promised to rain gold, and that it might as well be a deluge as a drop, since old Hammersmith had such excellent qualifications for a rain-maker. The mayor insisted that a shower was enough; and Buck finally agreed to take a wetting since he could not get the auriferous drenching he craved.

Bruce chose a raw, cold night for his duty call, and since he started long ahead of time, he found himself in front of the Hammersmith residence with an awkward thirty minutes on his hands. He started in by admiring the architecture of the huge pile, varying from the severely classical to the renaissance and modern, so you will see that there was plenty for one of Bruce's crude, unformed taste to study. Kimberly, the architect who lost the contract, said it would take him the better part of a day to point out the faults of the façade alone.

Tiring of counting the chimneys and the windows, Bruce turned away and walked a few blocks eastward toward the lake, and perching himself on the sea wall he looked out on the swirl of the waters, churning and roaring shoreward, and he gazed up at the deep, blue sky, almost velvety, so thick and impenetrable was the blue of it, and at the stars twinkling calmly and peacefully, undisturbed by the howling of the waters. A few minutes satisfied him and he arose mumbling: "That's it! What does Nature care for us? Not one bit! We starve and we suffer and we die, and it's all one to her."

He walked on and on, his hands clasped behind his back, his shoulders stooped, his large head inclined forward slightly, a woe-begone expression on his dark face as if all the misery of the world were weighing on his shoulders, as if the wail of the winds on the lake were the voices of the hungry and the poor, calling out to him to right their wrongs. He came to a halt suddenly, in the darkness of an area that

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the lamp lights left undisturbed, and sweeping his long arms out circlewise he muttered: "Who am I that you continually ask me to take up your cause? God Almighty, can't I be left in peace? I'm not the man for it, I tell you! There are fellows better fitted for the task; get them."

That very second he burst out into a short cluck of a laugh as if he had caught himself playing a little comedy for his own amusement, and he drew out his watch as if to divert his thoughts. Seeing from its face that the hour of his call had come, he hastened his steps to the home of the Hammersmiths and rang the front doorbell with something like nervous dread.

"I wonder," he muttered to himself, "if they would let me in the front door if they knew I used to deliver meat at the back?"

CHAPTER V

BRAINS BOW TO WEALTH

WHILE Bruce McAllister was cooling his heels out of doors Mr. Addison Hammersmith had been far less comfortable within; for if eight o'clock was the hour that troubled Bruce the thought of nine made Addison's flesh creep and his nerves tingle; for when that hour came, the newly elected Republican alderman was to be surprised by a huge demonstration to be given in his honor by the Sunflower Republican Social and Political Club—an affair which would have been kept perfectly secret if it had not leaked out.

Of course an extemporaneous speech was expected and Addison—forewarned is forearmed—was doing his level best to get his address in shape. If there was anything Addison hated, and there were few things he condescended to like, that thing was a speech, for he was not a born orator, although in one respect at least he reminded one of Demosthenes—when he spoke his mouth seemed filled with pebbles.

Addison had been for putting a ban on this surprise party of the club, but his mother shook her head and said that such conduct would be ungracious, and so he was obliged to accept the visit in the same spirit of thankfulness with which a child swallows a pill, believing rather in the wisdom of its elder than in the efficacy of the medicine.

"This is a very discouraging world," sighed Addison,

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“and I wish that I had never been born into it.” Addison had been born discouraged and his discouragement waxed with his age; although why and about what he was discouraged, it would be hard to find out. It is possible that his discouragement may have arisen from the fact that fortune had chosen him for her favorite child, and that consequently there was little that he could do for himself; but this view of the case, however, is too ungrateful to dame Fortune to be just to Addison. But, whatever the reason, Addison got as far as, “Fellow-citizens, it would indeed be difficult for me to tell you how delighted I am with this entirely unexpected honor,” and five times he yawned, threw himself into the arms of discouragement and buried his straw-colored head in the crimson and gold cushions of the huge divan on the dais. It may be, to weary your patience for the last time, that the luxury of the room was discouraging to the flow of those noble thoughts which simplicity alone is said to induce; for the palatial proportions of that Italian-Renaissance music room with its fine fireplace over which a life-size portrait of Beethoven hung, with its richly decorated ceiling beams, its fantastically carved door posts, its Flemish tapestries, its crimson velvet curtains hanging in straight folds, with its ornate candelabra, its gilded fauteuils—but enough has been said to show that if Addison insisted upon being disturbed there was plenty in that room to put him out.

Therefore the servant’s announcement that Mr. Bruce McAllister was in waiting came to Addison with a huge sense of relief, not only because his wearied brain yearned for distraction, but because he was glad to see Bruce for the mere sake of seeing him. “Show him right up,” he ordered cheerfully.

Bruce, timid in the face of such swaggering luxury,

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walked nervously through the oblong hall, fearful lest his shoulders come in contact with the rich Gobelin tapestries and they resent it, and so made his way to the room to which the lackey led him.

"I am so glad to see you, old fellow," said Addison jumping up to extend a warm and a welcoming hand.

"I came to extend my congratulations," said Bruce, still bashful, and angry at himself for feeling so.

"Well, that's very generous of you. I appreciate it. It may not sound sincere; but I wish you'd won, upon my word I do. This speech-making, hand-shaking business with a crowd of low foreigners isn't in my line. The whole thing is a dreadful bore. Believe me, I so wanted to be defeated and take a jaunt in Europe."

"I should think you would be very happy over your success," consoled Bruce, shifting uneasily on the edge of his fauteuil; "it ought to give you a great opportunity."

"To uplift the world, eh?" yawned Addison.

Bruce nodded absently, trying to accustom himself to the new surroundings, to analyze its parts in order to discover what made the splendor and glamour of the whole.

"Oh, that's all rot! I'm sick of hearing the words 'franchise' and 'paved streets.' What do I care whether the streets, between you and me, are paved with gold or just mud? I wasn't brought up for a contractor. And I don't see whose business it is if the street cars charge ten cents or three for a fare. If the people don't like it let 'em walk—that's all there is to it, let 'em walk; exercise is healthy."

Addison paced up and down the bright Persian rugs and drew to a halt in front of the great fireplace; the electric lights in the tall candlesticks throwing over Addison's face a glow that was subdued by the metal shades fashioned in the shape of crowns held by cupids. The strong contrast be-

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tween the patrician host and his plebeian guest was thus made the more striking. Bruce, swarthy, tall and gaunt, coarse of feature; Addison, blond to the color of straw, pink of cheek, small and refined of feature, round and short.

Addison went on, his hands thrust in the depths of his trouser pockets: "You don't know what people expect of rich men's sons. It's all that cursed American idea that everybody is the equal of everybody else and that all must work. Bah! What we need, I think, is an aristocracy; more seclusion, and less of this awful vulgarity. Equality and liberty are all right; I believe in them as much as anybody, but at the same time I want people to know their places."

A mad desire to burst out into a guffaw seized Bruce and he bit his lip and fixed his attention to a deciphering of the musicians' and authors' names which were carved on the heavy oak beams that divided the ceiling into thirds.

"I don't know what America is coming to, I swear I don't, McAllister. Why, do you know what was expected of me in this last election? I had to go in low bar-rooms and drink and hobnob with a lot of foreigners and loafers that I wouldn't have looked at the day before—just to get their votes."

There was a light step and the frou-frou of silks in the hall, and Addison interrupted his tirade to remark: "It's my mother; I'm glad she's coming in."

Mrs. Hammersmith entered. Bruce was flurried by the appearance of this graceful woman, very beautiful, he thought, with her chestnut hair, threaded with silver, her cameolike features, her unwrinkled cheeks, and her fine bearing. "I'm so glad to see you again," she said to Bruce in her musical voice, extending her richly jeweled hand. He stammered out his acknowledgments and congratulations.

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"Oh, yes," she went on, "we are all very happy over Addison's success, and we are all sorry that the loser had to be you. It would seem to be too bad in such cases that one's happiness must be at the expense of another's sorrow. It ought to be so arranged, I think, that everybody should win."

Somehow Bruce was beginning to feel at home, for the queer indescribable sensation of discomfort was leaving him. There was a moment's lull in the conversation which Bruce occupied to the full in comparing Addison with his mother, rather baffled by the mystery that gave such a son to such a mother, and which Mrs. Hammersmith spent in studying Bruce; it can't be said that the result of the study pleased her particularly.

"I hope," said Mrs. Hammersmith, rising, "that my son will always be animated by those same noble principles which you have so clearly expressed in your speeches and your writings. I am quite sure that, though you and Addison are of entirely different theories, both of you will be true to the highest ideals," and so saying she disappeared—the very word to describe her movement—from the room.

"I wonder how much of all that she meant," thought the skeptical Bruce.

"Noble principles! Fine purposes! High ideals!" yawned Addison; "I am so tired of hearing those confounded words that I wish they had never been invented. If I ever write a dictionary—I never shall—I will leave out——"

Addison ceased his scolding suddenly, his pink cheeks flushed red, and the startled attitude assumed by his short stout body seemed to scent disaster in the wind. The triumphant notes of "Hail! the Conquering Hero!" came shrill and piercing from the instruments of a band that was playing for all it was worth on the lawn in front of the house.

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"Oh, heavens!" moaned Addison, "there's that awful club and I don't know one word of my speech."

Bruce, biting his underlip to restrain a laugh, arose to leave; but Addison plucked him by the sleeve and pleaded, "No, don't go, I beg of you; stay here and see me through this bad piece of business. I suppose that crowd of ruffians will storm the house, just as if they belonged here. Well, it will show my mother a thing or two about noble principles, high ideals and all of that rot."

Bruce sat down again, fixing his eyes on the decorated ceiling; Addison walked up and down the room excitedly, twirling his key-ring around his thumb, clutching for words to put into his speech of welcome.

The band ceased playing with a suddenness as startling to Addison as that with which it had begun, and the motley throng, with Buck O'Brien at the head, defied the footman at the entrance and pushed pell-mell into the wide reception hall and the spacious drawing-rooms, each man afraid that his fellows would conspire to shut him out.

The portly Mr. Hammersmith, dignified and grave, stroked his florid gray whiskers solemnly and bade the crowd welcome in the name of his wife, his son and himself; but his greeting was so formal and stiff, so lacking in generous spontaneity that it was easy to see that his mind was busy estimating the cost and the damage of the reception rather than the pleasure it would give to the receiving and the received. Mrs. Hammersmith met the common herd as beamingly and as becomingly as if every one of them had been an exclusive member of her exclusive set, and Addison stood by with a fixed and studied smile, and shook the hands of the host that crowded around him for this high honor, his mind afar from it on the speech of welcome that still stubbornly refused to clothe itself in words.

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Streaks of mud and mire on Persian rugs, white bear and tawny tiger skins, showed plainly where democracy had taken pains to go out of its way to meet aristocracy; a huge Chinese vase, with an affrighted mandarin clinging to its exterior, was almost tossed to the floor by rude Caucasian shoulders (race prejudice will out!), and a Greek girl in the state that nature probably made her (Thorwaldsen was her creator) was brought so closely in contact with our refined modern civilization that she was almost overcome by the shame and the shock; a Japanese screen, an inlaid tea table, and a Turkish tabouret—but suffice it to say that not one thing went down in the death that threatened everything.

“Rimimber yer manners fer th’ love av Gawd!” yelled Buck as he caught sight of the cranes on the screen bending a startled flight toward the floor. “An’ as fer you, Larry Flannigan, I’d have ye rimimber them gilt vases ain’t to be taken home fer souvinirs.”

“Speech! Speech!” went up in a cry that threatened to bring the ceiling down on the floor, and to toss its polished oak beams on the heads of the mob upon which they looked with disdain.

Addison, a signal from his mother beseeching him to save the house of his father from destruction by his eloquence, launched out:

“FELLOW-CITIZENS: It would indeed be difficult for me to express my surprise and joy at this unexpected honor. There is always a peculiar delight which comes from meeting one’s own dear friends, I may say, in one’s own house. Fellow-citizens, we have triumphed nobly, I may say. As a result of the victory of the great party to which I may say that I have the honor to belong, we shall force the street railway companies—the street railway companies, I say—to

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furnish a car—no, a seat for every fare. Fellow-citizens, this is no more than just and right; any poor man who pays five cents for his seat is entitled to sit down. If companies are grasping enough to demand the streets, we shall ask for seats. No seats, no streets, is my motto. Fellow-citizens, once more I welcome you from the very bottom of my heart. As Shakespeare—I believe it was Shakespeare—said, ‘Be as ourselves in Denmark!’”

Oh, the applause! The lifting of enthusiastic voices! The huzzahs and the huzzahs! If an orator is to be judged—and why shouldn’t he be?—by the marks of approval which greet his efforts, we are willing to place Addison by the side of Demosthenes, to whom we ventured to compare him once more. Henceforth no timidity, Addison; trust thyself!

It was at this very moment that the right honorable Buck O’Brien, seizing the enthusiasm at its height—Buck had an eye for dramatic moments—responded on the part of the club with an oration so classic that it would be a shame not to repeat it for the benefit of those who are constantly upholding the ancients at the expense of the moderns.

“Our honorable alderman an’ th’ lady av th’ house! Sildum in th’ histree av th’ wurrl’d has this ward been called on to arruhms to protict th’ sacred foires av its altars an’ its homes agin an inimy so insidjous to th’ cause av liberty an’ true freedom. Nivir before did th’ rich an’ th’ poor jine hands to protict thimselves agin a common inimy—a greedy corporashun that was eager to grind both av thim down to th’ dust. Yer son Addison, mam, has showed himself to be a worthy represintitive av th’ Goddess av Liberty an’ indipindence, fer not Patrick Henry himself, Oireland’s first great American, was bolder than him in th’ hour av his

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country's nade. The blood av his forefathers is in Addison's veins. Addison's views, mam, on th' tariff an' th' home rule question shows him imminintly capable av handlin' th' knotty problem av strate-car franchises an' kapin' th' strates clane. With you, mam, so to spake, at th' broom, an' Addison at th' helm, there is no rason why th' strates av Chicago shouldn't shine like thim av auld Athens in th' palmy days av Julius Cæsar. A new order av things is on th' glorious way to its finish. May Addison's ricord in th' council, mam, give yersilf an' Mr. Hammersmith no cause to regrit th' amount av hard earned gold lavished extravagantly on his eddication in th' public schools av Chicago an' Yale. May th' ship av shtate sail on, bearin' Addison, th' poor and th' nadey, to th' office av President av th' United States—a job which kings might envy an' quanes desire."

CHAPTER VI

THE TATTOOED MAN

NO, young Hammersmith, I'm juicy enough fer you and yer ma if you want votes, but in swell society I'm a rotten tomato. You know what you can do? I'll tell you what you can do. You can go and pack fog. Go and put fogs in cans until you learn how to treat a gentleman." Thus, snapping his dirty fingers, spake Jerry Hogan, "King of the Bums" and absolute monarch of the lodging-house vote, to Addison in a corner of the Hammersmith drawing-room. Jerry was righteously angry because Buck O'Brien was commanding exclusive attention and throwing him into complete eclipse.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Hogan," said Addison, who had been sent to pacify the man by those who dreaded his power, "I'm indeed sorry that you take umbrage; if Mr. O'Brien was selected to deliver the speech it was not my fault, I had nothing to do with it."

It was a little hard for Addison to determine whether or not he smelled the whisky in which Jerry's breath was soaked or the hair oil in which he had drenched his beard and locks, duly to honor the occasion. Either alone was bad enough, but both together were terrible. "What an odious creature," thought Addison; "he looks as if he lived in a sewer. And I have to get on my knees before him!"

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"O'Brien selected himself and that's the oyster that selected him," growled Jerry, "and I'm going to get out of this! I didn't want to come, anyways. What does a turnip like me want in swell society? To hell with it! I like the plain tamales! I'm going home," he ended with a roar audible from one end of the room to the other, "and youse can go and can fog. Tell your ma I said so!"

His majesty, in kingly disdain of all furniture and statuary that impeded his way, reeled toward the door—Addison was for calling the footman to throw him through it—when Buck O'Brien himself crossed his path and mollified his royal highness. Buck must have been consummate in the arts of diplomacy, for a second later the king sought out the unfortunate whom he had consigned to this impossible task, put his greasy arm around his neck and whispered: "It's all right, Hammersmith; you ain't such a poor potato after all." On the wide territory embraced by the king's metaphors, it will be seen the sun of poesy could set easily. "You and me kin run a bar in here, trim the mirrors a bit different, put that naked statue behind a palm, and make a first-class saloon out of this. Upstairs we can pile in the hoboos. There's money in it. I'm the onion that knows what he's spieling about."

In his enthusiasm the king removed his arm, which probably resented the condescension, and Addison escaped, plying his handkerchief with an ardor that told how diligent he could be when he had the proper incentive. Bruce, who had been standing near by to watch the performance, burst into a loud laugh when somebody behind him said:

"You seem to be enjoying it immensely, Mr. McAllister."

Wondering where he had heard before that softly modulated voice with the one hard note in it, like a fine instrument

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the least perceptible bit out of tune, he turned and faced Inez.

She was dressed in a light pink gown that clung loosely to her bare, superb shoulders, chastely white as ivory. A pearl necklace wound around her neck and a pendant hung lovingly toward her full bosom. A plain gold ornament held in check her thick coils of chestnut hair, which one half expected to see break loose from the light restraint and fall in a luxurious shower to her knees.

"It's not a bad bit of vaudeville," he answered, surveying her smiling face and comparing her in her beauty to Thorwaldsen's Greek girl that faced them both, molded on ample lines of frame and limb, clean cut, firm and enduring as the marble out of which the cunning chisel had fashioned it.

"I'd Leave my Happy Home for You," whistled the King of Bums, strolling past Inez, his hands thrust deep down in his pockets, peering at her critically, his greasy head cocked to one side. There was something irresistibly funny rather than wantonly insulting in his attitude and Inez burst out laughing and Bruce with her. Addison, not so delighted by the deference paid his sister by a king, flew into a pet and was for having him ejected from the premises, politics or no politics, when the suave courtier Buck O'Brien intervened and saved the king once more. His majesty retreated to a cabinet of antiques and held a monologue, a crowd of his henchmen around him, on the advisability of the hostess distributing the contents for souvenirs.

"Addison," smiled Inez, "ought to expect that sort of thing if he goes into politics."

"Certainly," returned Bruce "they can all vote—some of them, if they're not caught, many times."

"Boys," called Addison, "there's a stand-up lunch waiting for you in the dining-room;" and immediately after this

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announcement he rushed up to Bruce with, "I say, Bruce, I guess you won't care much about eating with this crew—you're welcome to my place. It's the last time any of 'em get in here unless it is through a window. You might prefer to stay here and talk with Inez. I won't be gone long. The King of Bums ought to be buried in the ground instead of being allowed to move in front of a table."

"We might go into the picture gallery," suggested Inez, and she led the way across the hardwood floors and rugs into the conservatory. Bruce followed.

The crowd pushed hurriedly toward the dining room, Buck at the head, King Jeremiah taking an unwilling second place. His highness sulked again, turning up his nose at what he called the cheap grub; and when he learned that beer instead of champagne was to be served his disgust knew no bounds. He went from one of his subjects to the other, exhibiting in his hand one of the waferlike sandwiches and muttering: "Look at this so you'll know it next time when you see it! They call this a sandwich! Yes, a sandwich! So help me Gawd, I'm going to have its picture took to hand around the next time this young cabbage head runs fer office!"

Terence Sullivan, oil inspector, delivered his famous toast "The Ladies," which, beginning with Eve, for this occasion was brought down to Mrs. Hammersmith, comparable to the best of them according to Terence, whose knowledge of the fair sex was encyclopædic. The speech was greeted with marked favor by all except the king who kept muttering: "What to hell! What to hell! She ain't so much! Look at the grub she sets up! They show me first next time!"

Meanwhile, the swarthy Bruce and the fair Inez were passing through the long, brilliantly lit picture gallery, its

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walls covered with fairly representative works of the older schools and many best examples of the more modern. He felt himself responding to her beauty too quickly, and, cognizant of his limitations, he recognized the futility of it and checked the process by his power of will. Life had taught him the folly of wasting effort in the attempt to put a claiming finger on the moon.

Inez, on the other hand, recognizing the intellectual strength of the man was tempted to try the power of her beauty over it. She was not at all conscious that this was her purpose. She told herself merely that he interested her for the moment. His character was complex; to unravel it challenged her ingenuity. Inez, taking her beauty for granted, flattered herself only on her intellect and she was amenable to flattery only along that line.

He had piqued her curiosity on the evening of his address, and even more than that, he had stimulated her thought, and more still, he had ruffled her emotions, which, seated far below the surface, were hard, although far from impossible, to reach. She was not so cold as she seemed! Of course a word, a detached sentence or two, still remained with her, echoing in her mind now and then when occasion awoke their memory, but even these grew fainter and fainter as the days sped on. Is it not the author of our greatest psychology who holds up to us as a terrible example the Russian lady who wept copious tears over the fate of the heroine inside the theater while her coachman sat freezing on the box of her carriage without? Doubtlessly when the play was over my lady had done with her weeping, and the fate of the heroine either perished from her memory, or sunk, more dead than alive, into the dim region of her subconsciousness.

Had it been otherwise with Inez it would have approached the border line of miracle. Environment, social

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interests, temperament, molded the grooves down which her thoughts ran, and their direction was radically opposite to those Bruce had lured them into taking for a minute or two. A single emotion no more makes a habit of mind than a single puff of wind determines the course of a river. Whatever her faults, and Inez had her full share of them, she tried to be honest with herself and she scorned to pretend to believe in what she did not believe. She honestly thought his notions, on a more mature consideration, to be false to the core and prejudiced at the very base.

Moreover, his vagarious ideas interfered with her intellectual complacency and she dismissed them in obedience to that primal law which makes us protect our happiness as our very selves. If Truth disturbs our conscience, we must either submit to her sway or else prove her a liar and oust her! Inez was glad that honesty did not ask her to admit beyond the portals the distorted thing that Bruce McAllister called truth. It was, she thought, like Bruce himself, ugly to look upon and not attractive to her highly developed esthetic sense.

Still, which was quite natural, too, now that Inez saw Bruce again, her interest was reawakened and she meant to know him better, to test his mettle and incidentally her own. He was different than the men with whom she came in contact, who trod the commonplace orbit that led between their desks and their homes, whose thoughts were as precisely mapped out as their paths—both in many cases having been planned by a father. Young, vital, eager, in love with existence, with every breath she drew, she was athirst and aflame for the knowledge of life and of people. Her spirit in this respect was quite the same as that of an ardent geologist who wishes to know all about rocks, not because he indulges an idea so insane as to think his knowledge will be of any benefit to the rocks, but simply because he has the curiosity and

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rocks happen to pique it. Life had drawn a circle around her and forced her to move within its circumference. Bruce McAllister had given her one of her first glimpses beyond.

"Do you like pictures?" she asked suddenly. It was to break the ice into which he was to fall, while she, at it were, was to stand on the shore and watch how he disported himself in the uncomfortable situation.

"I don't understand them," he answered; "that is, they don't make any appeal to me. Neither does music. An artistic sense, so my sister says, is entirely lacking in me. I'm sorry, but so be it."

"Oh, you have a sister?" mentally Inez pictured the sister, wondering if she could be as ugly as Bruce.

"Yes, I have. She doesn't look like me. The picture you have formed of her doesn't do her justice." Inez started as one taken unawares. Bruce continued: "They say she has a big talent. She's doing some clever work in plaster modeling. All the McAllisters are smart," he added with a childlike naïveté.

Inez laughed again, showing pearly teeth; her brown eyes changed color like the waters of the sea, moving ever, the same and yet not the same. Bruce looked down on her from his superior height of four inches. "A skeleton in clothes," flashed through her mind. The magnetism of her mere personal beauty went through him like an electric current, disturbing his self-mastery, scattering his thoughts to the four corners of the picture gallery. Then he regained his control, angry at himself for having lost it.

"We might sit down," and she suited the action to the word, dropping gracefully into a small couch that was covered with embroidery of the time when Louis XIV was king.

"Well," said Bruce, studying the design, "it hardly seems right to sit on the face of that elegant gentleman in the

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short trousers and ribbons, who is bowing to me. Why is it that the amount of commerce seems to have increased with the length of men's trousers?"

"As men grew more businesslike," she answered, "their dress was fated to become more practical."

"Sounds natural." Bruce swung out his long arm and looked with a ludicrous countenance at his long legs. "I'm glad they didn't drop me down with those knickerbockered, beribboned fellows—it would have been too hard on the tailors."

She thought he lacked in sensitiveness, not seeing how the attacking of one's own weakest point is much like building a defense around it, how very like it is to taking the enemy's strongest weapon out of his hands and astonishing him into admitting its weakness.

"I'm far more interested in politics than in clothes," she said to him.

"Well, politics is clothes and bread and butter, besides, to most of us."

"I did not think you went into politics with that aim," she said.

"Why should you?" asked Bruce, swinging a long arm at the surrounding elegance and luxury. He never would permit himself to talk to anybody but Bruce McAllister on lofty aims and ideals in politics, and even then he caught the humorous Bruce chuckling in his sleeve at the serious one.

"Why shouldn't I?" asked Inez, seeking the exit from her own trap.

"Well," he volunteered, "politics is the way hundreds of us have of making our living. We go into it as your father, for instance, has gone into business. You may answer me that we promise and that we are expected to serve the ends of the public, therefore our aim should be higher. But

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my answer is that politics is nothing but a machine run to aid the transaction of business. We are expected to serve business; it's a farce to pretend otherwise. How then can our aims be higher than the ends we are forced to serve? Anyway, it is expecting a good deal of high ideals to ask them to stand up against the material forces of hunger and want. Have you ever gone hungry?" he asked abruptly.

"Spiritually hungry?"

"Spiritual hunger is nothing," returned Bruce, who had felt the pangs of it, "that is a kind of longing that comes after a hearty dinner; it's the coffee with which we top off." His features dropped into a dull repose; then a melancholy, absent look stole over them. Inez noticed it.

"Have you ever gone hungry?" she asked, somewhat more sympathetically.

"A growing boy goes hungry all the time," he answered guardedly. He paused a second and then said, as if taking her question more seriously: "Yes, I went hungry very often. My father died when I was a mere lad and I was left practically to support a family." He stopped short again. His pride in obstacles overcome was just, his reserve concerning the nature of them natural.

Her eyes, lustrously brown, fastened on him intently. "Go on," they said, appealingly. Her hands clasped her knees; her lips rounded expectantly. Hers was the listening attitude. Inez's idea of poverty had been gleaned from such polite books as "The Princess Casamassima," which is like learning what the pains of rheumatism are from the third cousin of the man who had it. The poor had her intellectual pity, but she had been reared to believe that their poverty was their own fault. Had not her mother had a seamstress who returned generosity with impudence, a coachman who drank too much, a chef who proved dishonest? She was eager to

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learn from him who knew and whose knowledge came from a first-hand experience. Her mute appeal lifted the finger of reserve from his lips.

"I was only thirteen when my father died, and I quit school at once and went to the alderman of our ward, a man by the name of McQuirk for whom my father had done some political favors, and I insisted that he find me work. I was a tall boy for my age, and he put me to driving a wagon for a butcher by the name of Collberger. I had the habit of sitting up until all hours of the night reading and studying and taking cat naps on the wagon seat during the day. One cold winter night I had a delivery to make out in the country and I dozed off. When they found me on the roadside I was half frozen and the horse and wagon were nowhere in sight. They took me to the hospital, and the doctor talked about snipping off my leg, but I wouldn't stand for it, and the result is I can still stand on my own legs. When I got well I applied at Collberger's for my old job, but he wouldn't give it to me. He insisted that my carelessness had nearly lost a horse and wagon for him, which was right in a way, although I thought he ought to have considered that it nearly cost me a leg. Then I wandered around the streets in search for something to do; the times were hard and I couldn't get it. We lived on bread and water in those days—I don't exaggerate—and I can tell you there wasn't any too much of it." His eyes wavered, the gray in them dying away and leaving them a dreamy blue.

"Go on, won't you," she appealed softly.

Ours is no age of romance, knight errantry and battle, but one of prosaic commerce, and our modern Othellos woo and win our modern Desdemonas not by accounts of moving accidents and hair-breadth escapes in the imminent, deadly breach, but by the gentler tale of service done our great god

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Success in fields commercial. The witchcraft used in either case is quite the same—power.

“Finally I lined up enough voters in the ward to influence McQuirk to influence Collberger, and he took me back against his will. It was practically my first insight into the power of influence, of pull and of politics. I made it a point to do my sleeping in bed this time and I got along better. After a while Collberger advanced me to a clerkship. His store was quite a haunt for politicians, for he had the county meat contract and had his finger in other fires as well. I kept my eyes and ears open and I picked up a few tricks of the trade. In fact, I learned so many tricks that Collberger was really afraid to let me go and he raised my salary at convenient intervals. I was paid for what I wasn’t supposed to know. Meanwhile, I kept on with my books at night in the way the Lincoln birthday orator has made fashionable for poor young men. My brother Peter, who is a few years younger than I, yet more of a scholar, helped me along.

“One campaign when McQuirk was counting votes the way a miser counts dollars, I came to his rescue and he, with Collberger backing my petition—he was anxious to rid him of bad rubbish—found me a job in the city hall. I maneuvered until I placed my brother Peter, who has a scientific turn of mind, in the bacteriological department of the same employer, and I kept my place until I was admitted to the bar. I used a good deal of the city’s time to good advantage studying law. There you have me; it’s all my history,” he ended.

“Except the parts you have chosen not to tell,” she commented, her desire more aroused than satisfied.

He looked in his absent way through the glass door of the conservatory and caught sight of the hungry members of the club gormandising. The cut glass, the silver and gold,

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the Florentine sideboard, the tapestries and the soft tints of the painted panels—all this magnificence thrown into strange contrast with the gluttonous *hoi polloi*, dawned as suddenly on Bruce's consciousness as if the view had not been before him all evening.

"Perhaps you would rather be in there than talking with me," said Inez, noticing the direction in which his eyes were turned. Was she in the least piqued because his attention wandered from her?

"No," said Bruce decidedly; and then, absently, "You interest me."

Astonishment, perceptible as a shadow, wavered over her countenance. In a way the tables had been turned on her by this odd, decidedly homely, and positively awkward man. Had those piercing gray eyes of his divined her motives? His cleverness, seemingly, was not confined to oratory. It reminded her of the time when she had hired a French maid for the purpose of better acquiring her idiom; but the astute maid had merely improved the opportunity to perfect her English.

"I'm really glad you are interested in me," she laughed good-naturedly, in full appreciation of the situation.

Bruce shook a nervous foot, mistaking appreciation for sarcasm. "Well," he brought out after a second's pause, "there's nothing I like to do better than to pull down walls."

"Addison's friends," she said regretfully, "are taking their departure, and I am afraid we shall have to go. Perhaps you will come to see me again? It seems to me as if we had removed no more than the first stone from the dividing wall." She rose with a courtesy.

"Just one second," said Bruce, rising with her; "I want to tell you a little story. When I was a boy I went to the circus and the thing that attracted me most was the tattooed

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man. I was a skeptical youngster and I wouldn't believe that he was genuine. I had the notion that he was merely dressed in a thin, decorated velvet suit. So do you know what I did? I stuck pins into him. The first time the least bit, and he didn't feel it. The second time I jabbed him and he yelled and cursed; then I stole away satisfied."

Her fine brows knit. She deduced the moral of the story, only after the author of it had disappeared, arm in arm with the Honorable Buck O'Brien.

BOOK TWO

CHAPTER I

THE MAGIC CARPET

WHO'S running this country, anyway, this man McAllister or I?" asked Anthony Wyckoff, father of The Trust of Trusts, of Sydney P. Shaw, the most powerful man on the floor of the House of Representatives—at least when Bruce McAllister and several others were off it.

"I can't see that McAllister has much to do with it," said Shaw in his most cajoling tones.

"Shut him up then," ordered Anthony in his rich bass voice, his cross eyes twinkling, his cheeks puffing.

Anthony Wyckoff, dubbed "Sir Anthony" by those who felt the pressure of his thumb, was the very general over all the captains of industry. He was the founder of the Cosmopolitan Oil Company; he was considered the richest man in the world and he was a dreadful sufferer from the gout. He was a figure so important that he impressed himself on the English language and wrought a change in it: since his advent the phrase "as rich as a Jew" was obsolescent.

How many ambitious lads have not read his short autobiographical articles in the *Encourager*? He tells there of his struggles against inconceivable hardships and he attributes his degree of modest success to perseverance, hard work, uncompromising honesty, and a rigid adherence to the doctrines of Christianity as practiced by the Master Himself. He felt

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the Lord was on his side, which is good for business; he sincerely believed the Lord had given, and stood in terrible dread lest the Lord take away. When a twinge of the gout warned him of the transitoriness of all things human, he hastened to found a university or hospital, and so he secured a new lease on life and a new peace of mind. Presidents of universities and managing boards of hospitals watched the newspapers carefully to learn the state of Sir Anthony's health. The great toe of no man on earth, save the Pope's, has been accorded such reverence.

Any number of biographies, other than Anthony's, will tell you by what methods he gained control over the oil that lights the world; here we may content ourselves with pointing out that Anthony merely did on a colossal scale what hundreds and hundreds were doing on a scale too petty for his masterful consideration, and what thousands of others would have been happy to do if they had but had the brains to let them do it. He permitted himself but one economic theory—whatever is worth owning at all is worth owning all alone. No one could go into the oil business without his permission and he extended the privilege to himself only.

"This man McAllister's talk," continued Sir Anthony—we interrupt his biography to continue his conversation with Shaw—"is stirring up in this country a foolish and wicked sentiment that I don't like. I can't do what I want if such demagogues keep on lying to an impressionable public and make it believe that I am trespassing on its liberties! It's absurd and it's contemptible!" Anthony's compact form bobbed up from the red plush chair and appeared at the hotel window. The rectangular vistas of Washington, sparkling in the wintry sunshine, met his gaze. The snow was falling with a soothing touch on the city that lay below him. He saw the Capitol as in miniature. It might have

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reminded an intelligence more awake to comparisons of one of those toy scenes wedged in the bottom of a crystalline ball, over which the snow is set to flying by a dexterous twist of the hand. The White House, robed in ermine like a simple monk suddenly exalted, the rare trees and shrubbery of Lafayette Square in new and coquettish attire, appealed to him in vain; his mind was elsewhere.

"Come," put in Sydney P. Shaw suddenly; "to what, after all, amounts the little legislation that McAllister is getting?"

"I don't care about that, Shaw—I suppose we have to fling the mob a sop once in so often—but it's the principle of the thing. If that revolutionary spirit is set afoot, who knows when it's going to stop? I tell you, the people of this great country are a good deal better off if they know nothing about the nonsense McAllister is trying to stuff into their heads. I pay good wages, I have no intention, upon my word and honor, of grinding them down, and they'll starve to death when these demagogues rule."

Sir Anthony shifted windows as he shifted sentences. His eyes traveled down the huge stairs made by the jagged roof-tops and swept along Pennsylvania Avenue, which begins so well with the democratic White House and the classic Treasury and goes to pieces long before it reaches the middle with the horrible Post Office, which atones for its fault by ending with the Capitol and its grounds. Pennsylvania Avenue was far more of a jumble than Sir Anthony's mind; one might have wondered, had not the sheet of white covered its multitude of sins, what mad giant's hand had tossed together helter-skelter that fantastic array of lodging houses, pretentious hotels, saloons, pawnshops, Chinese restaurants and laundries. The aspect of the avenue, again unlike Anthony Wyckoff's mind, was southern in its care-

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lessness; the old-fashioned fronts of its decayed houses, now degenerated into petty shops, reminded one of an ante-bellum southern town that merely existed in the present to boast sadly of the grandeur of its past.

"Shut him up!" said Anthony, turning his back on the window. "If you can't shut McAllister up one way, try another."

Sydney P. Shaw shook his fine head and stroked his blond beard with his white hand. "We've tried several ways. We've offered him the law work for your western railways and he laughed."

"Laughed," repeated Anthony as if shocked, his voice sinking deeper. "What does the fellow want?—to make a colossal fortune by overthrowing me! That's a game several of them are trying."

"It's hard work to get at the motives of men; but he seems in earnest. The Speaker could shut him up in five minutes if he wanted to—he's more or less to blame for all of it at bottom."

"I was always afraid that Fiske might prove unsafe," said Anthony. "It was against my better judgment to let him go where he is. But that's done now. Besides, you can never quite tell about men until they're tried. Suppose we sound McAllister more subtly. There's the Trans-oceanic."

Shaw nodded knowingly.

It will be seen from this straight-to-the-point conversation that Bruce McAllister had stepped on the magic carpet and been whirled away on it from Chicago to Washington. Politics made the warp and woof of the carpet that carried him along at a terrific speed from the legislature of Illinois, where he made a name for himself in the case of *People vs. Corruption* to the state's attorneyship, where he made a still

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greater name for himself, and thence to the national hall of legislation at Washington.

It was while Bruce was state's attorney that he came in contact and conflict with Franklin De Wolfe Fiske, who after serving his country with honor in and out of Congress, refused the Cabinet portfolio that had been offered him. Fiske's services had been called into requisition by several kings of commerce—at a price big enough to bankrupt their combined treasury—whom our hero was prosecuting for their successful attempts to restrain trade.

Fiske began by belaboring and ridiculing Bruce in his usual ironical fashion; he ended by expressing unstinted admiration for him. When he left Chicago he remarked that the three things that impressed him most were Lake Michigan, Bruce McAllister, and the Stock Yards, and of these three, McAllister alone was worth the price of the trip. It was high praise coming from a man whose favorite method of expression was irony and who rarely mentioned anybody without attaching to his name an epithet that made the owner thereof wish he might change it.

Bruce himself laid little stress on Fiske's praise or blame, for the truth is, that he took neither his legal victories nor defeats to heart, and he was beginning to take the law less and less seriously. It was characteristic of him to challenge the profession that was filling his pockets with gold, and to ask of it, "What means the law to my people, the propertyless? Is it not an entirely negative institution for them? Is it not?"—but enough of this, since it suffices to say that either his impatience with a profession in which he no longer believed, or else his ambition or his fate, led him to resign and to run for Congress. But again, if his purpose was not unselfish, how explain the sacrifices he made? For the details of the election we refer the curious as well as the lover

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of the technicalities of politics to any one of the half dozen biographies of Bruce McAllister that have appeared since.

At the time when Bruce entered the Republican House, Franklin De Wolfe Fiske was the Speaker of it, and he gave Bruce what has been given by one man to another so seldom in Washington, as to make the gift noteworthy—namely, a “glad hand” backed by a sincere heart. He told Bruce behind the closed doors of the Speaker’s room, where they had many a long conversation, he would do for him any reasonable favor that lay in his power.

Circumstances, like Fiske himself, arranged themselves on the side of Bruce. The epoch was propitious for one of his kidney; radicalism had a pedestal in waiting for the man of the hour to mount. Labor was restless, capital unyielding, and the one opened an itching palm to close tightly around the throat of the other. Peacemakers proposed remedies for the evil; Bruce humorously proved the remedies worse than the disease. Humor needs little blazoning of trumpets to assemble an audience. Bruce was quoted far and wide. The press commended his ability while deprecating his attitude. His radicalism would lag steadily behind his acquired wisdom, it predicted, and gradually be lost from sight. Conservatism, ripening gradually, would hail him a coming man. Before long, when it was known that McAllister “was up,” each seat had a listener. Those who were diverted realized afterwards with a start that they had been instructed.

Moreover, the Democrats, who, to quote Fiske, “were not by far so weak numerically as intellectually,” were imposing stumbling-blocks in the way of legislation. In their ranks were a number of young men whom neither the interests of a class, nor bribery, nor corruption, nor the party whip could force into line. These had Bruce’s ideas more or less vaguely, but his conscious ideals were lacking in their equipment. He

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directed them toward a common aim; he throttled vagueness. They gathered around the flag he hoisted and they presented a solid front, as conscious of purpose as was the enemy whom they assaulted.

He was toiling day and night now on a bill directed against the employment of child labor on products that crossed state lines. He was a willing slave to the bill; it claimed him heart and mind like a mistress. Anthony dreaded lest it slip through a chink in the Interstate Commerce Committee room, mouselike, evade all the traps that the watchful Shaw, who was chairman of the committee, had set for it, and scamper along on the floor of the House.

Anthony objected to the bill, not that he loved children less, but that he loved profits more, and besides it stood in the way of the consummation of his schemes with a so-to-say juvenile indiscretion. The work of the world must be done, the big deals brought to fruition, and what matters it, after a multitude of suns have set and risen, if a generation or two of children be crushed out in the process? Others will take their place in the scheme of things and a hurrying world will mark no difference, but a great scheme gone astray may tear out a joint from the rails of civilization and wreck the engine of progress.

CHAPTER II

AN ENEMY TO BRUCE

IT was ten o'clock when Sydney P. Shaw, quitting Anthony Wyckoff, left the hotel and sauntered leisurely along F Street past the Doric-columned portico, Parthenon-like, of the Department of the Interior's huge buildings.

"This affair with McAllister will straighten itself out all right," he said to himself, stroking his blond beard with his neatly gloved hand.

Sydney was at peace with himself and quite satisfied with the world as it wagged. Anthony had given him his word, for one thing, that he was to have his indorsement as the next presidential candidate—Sydney barely had escaped the nomination twice—and while Shaw believed that Anthony's word was as good as his bond, and we have just learned how good that was, he had something still more substantial in his pocket, namely, six hundred shares in the Transoceanic Transfer Company—one of the many schemes that kept in ferment the fertile imagination of our king of commerce.

In brief, this little scheme was one whereby the government was to subsidize its international mail service and pay about a million and a half into the coffers of the treasury of the Transoceanic for letter-carrying alone. On the face of it the bonus was open to all competing lines, but the bill was so skilfully drawn—what otherwise was the use of having two such heads as Sydney's and Anthony's?—with such

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limitations as to size, speed and ownership, that only the vessels of the Transoceanic would come under its provisions.

Thinking of these things, Sydney P. Shaw moved serenely along. The snow still fell, though more gently, gracing all it touched from the freestone granite and marble of the great government buildings to the store fronts of F Street, devoted to shoppers. Women passed him, gayly attired in light garments, relying on the usual mildness of Washington winters. Several acquaintances of the sex bowed to him; but these he heeded not, so lost was he in his own thoughts. Others looked at him with a quick, shy glance of admiration, for Shaw's appearance did no dishonor to his statesmanship. His fine figure, erect and manly, his intellectual forehead, his attractive face, his Hyperion locks and whiskers gave him the power to attract always, to command on occasion. It was only the closest of observers who would have caught the slight suggestion of furtiveness in Shaw's penetrating, oblong eyes that drooped toward his high temples. The lids fell over them curtainwise, almost like superfluous flesh. His eyelids concealed from the curious any change of expression in the eyes, and his blue eyes seemed formed to conceal the perfect stream of thoughts that poured in and out of the deep caverns of Shaw's mind. "Yes," he thought, again stroking his beard, "we can roll McAllister to one side the way the sun rolls the fog."

He moved on through Judiciary Square, its bare trees made by the snow to resemble the columns of a cathedral. The bright red of the ugly Pension building struck a false tone in the color scheme, and Sydney felt, without knowing why, that something was amiss when his eye fell on the structure's monotonous march of infantry, cavalry, and artillery along the commonplace frieze. The snowfall lessened suddenly and he sat him down on one of the benches and

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looked at the friendly, odd, little buildings of the city hall and courthouse. The air was mild, springlike, carrying with it but a tang of wintriness.

Ah, everything was pleasant to him on that white morning which nature had built like a proper framework around his mood. Again he paid his respects to Bruce McAllister as a disappearing body. Considering the ease with which Bruce was blown to one side, the frequency of the compliment was remarkable.

"I wonder," he purred to himself softly, tracing a parallelogram in the snow with the tip of his shoe, "if Georgia couldn't call Miss—Miss— what's her name? from Chicago into requisition?"

He smiled blandly; it seemed to him a neat stroke in diplomacy to let the ironical Fiske move the squadrons of the opposition, and then to checkmate him through the maneuvering of his own daughter. It was eleven now. Cupid's smile hovered over the four on the dial of his watch, for at that hour he had an appointment with her. There were weighty affairs that would claim his coolest wits in the meantime, and he tried to dismiss the likeness he had evoked, but the image of the golden Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck persisted. The most enigmatic of smiles played around Sydney's sensitive lips. The thought of the great Fiske shackled thus vicariously may have delighted him. Politics was war, and in war all was fair.

Shaw arose from the bench with an energetic start, walked along to New Jersey Avenue, thence to the Capitol. The snow began to fall heavier and heavier, then it came down in a swirl like the swaying of white robes, fold on fold, of some dancing sylph. The columned tiers of the Capitol's marble, rising skyward to support the lofty dome, were hazy in outline, half hidden from view. The great dome itself

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seemed to float gently down from the skies as if carved out of the unsubstantial snow, and to settle down on its massive peristyle, and Liberty In Arms, Crawford's successful statue, moved like some goddess behind her veil of fleecy white clouds and stepped majestically into her place on the waiting lantern.

A few minutes after Sydney entered the Capitol and made for the room that belonged to the Committee of Interstate Commerce, of which he was chairman, Sir Anthony Wyckoff left his hotel, walked hastily through Lafayette Square and passed into the snug little White House. He had an appointment with the President at a quarter past eleven precisely and he hoped, time being money at an exorbitant rate per minute, he wouldn't be kept in waiting for a second. He managed to dodge the newspaper men, who had been cautioned to be on the lookout for him, and he met the President in the library.

The President was under a direct personal obligation to Sir Anthony, for the magnate's influence had helped not only to nominate him in the national convention, but his liberal contribution to the campaign fund also had furthered the prospects of the election. Moreover, the President leaned on our merchant king for advice, believing that whatsoever was bad for Sir Anthony was bad for commerce, and *vice versa*, and that in any way to disturb the business and vested interests of the country was to severely injure the fortunes of his party. When Sir Anthony spoke, commerce spoke, which after all was the only voice worthy of a consideration in the United States; in fact, Sir Anthony was a silent member of the Cabinet who never kept still when any measure of importance was up for a hearing. Clear-headed, logical, direct, he could make as clear as day to the President that which the jargon of others steeped in darkness and involved in mystery.

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Anthony Wyckoff saluted the President familiarly by his first name, shook his hand without the slightest shadow of condescension, and then made a bee-line for business. His deep, rich voice—one of the chief sources of Anthony's power over men—rolled out melodiously and spent its eloquence on the reasons why the foreign mail service was in need of subsidization. The President gave Sir Anthony's remarks his thoughtful attention, promising to lend the subject an exhaustive examination when the bill came up before Congress.

Anthony Wyckoff hastened out of the White House, cut through Executive Avenue and entered the huge Romanesque building devoted to the War, State and Navy departments. He regretted the frittering away of his time, but it was necessary to urge the bill upon the Naval Committee of the House. It ought to take him but a few minutes; indeed, why should it require more? The secretary's son had married Anthony's second daughter, and the two families were so closely united that what was good for one could do no harm to the other.

Henry Kinkaid, Secretary of the Navy, was a remarkable man; he had fine manners, gray hair and an imposing air. He never spoke unless he had something to say. He was the most taciturn man in Washington. He had a wonderful memory for figures, the accuracy of which none could dispute. During his leisure, when a country banker, he had written a history of the American navy, and since it disputed everything that everybody else had said, it was considered a remarkable book by those who took the word of the author's friends for it.

When Sir Anthony took the elevator, ascended to the second floor, and walked down the tessellated floor of the dark corridor to the secretary's office, he found the usual crowd in the outer room, but the clerk recognizing him at a glance

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announced him without asking his name or his business. The inner door swung open, some one else passed out, and Sir Anthony passed in. Arising, the secretary extended a cordial hand. Anthony surveyed him with his cool, little cross-eyes, asked after the health of his daughter and her babies in that deep compelling voice of his, and then proceeded to business. Kinkaid nodded wisely as Sir Anthony dipped deeper into the bill, and when Kinkaid had finished nodding, Anthony removed his hat from the table, gave a frightened look at his watch, and left.

Anthony hastened back by the way he had come, passed by the White House again and made for the Doric front of the Treasury building. Again the ascension by elevator, the march through the dark corridors, an entrance into the crowded outer office with its usual ornaments of red carpet, silver pitcher and tray, old-fashioned bookcases full of musty government reports, and its walls hung with the portraits of former secretaries, most of whose names were now as unfamiliar as their faces. It was through the Secretary of the Treasury that the company would be paid its subsidies and Anthony wished certain matters understood before the bill became a law.

Secretary of the Treasury Scarborough's biography is even shorter than that of the distinguished Kinkaid. Before entering the Cabinet he had been a successful merchant, and when he left it he intended to become the president of a national bank in New York, of which the good Sir Anthony was the principal stockholder.

The moment the magnate put in his appearance the secretary's secretary bowed his chief's visitors out and Anthony in. Scarborough was standing at the end of the long table, littered with papers, that took up almost one half of his narrow office, his back turned to the cheerful fire burning in

the grate. Anthony looked like a child next to the burly secretary, and Scarborough seemed to feel the difference, for he bent his right leg and leaned down when he shook hands, as if to make himself smaller on purpose. Scarborough was far from being what we term a bad-looking man, although his bludgeon-shaped nose, his black eyes, and his blacker beard and long mustache, the ends of which projected far out and bristled pugnaciously, gave to him a decidedly fierce expression. A close observer might have noted that he wore a wig, and a certain gossip, whom nothing seems to have escaped, remarked: "Scarborough takes the credit for other men's hair as well as their brains. Little Vepasian Vandivdivier, who has been a clerk in the department since the year one, does all the work and Scarborough bags all the honors."

Sir Anthony put his points with a one-two-threelike precision and left. "The world is a fire full of roasting chestnuts," thought Anthony—his conclusion concerning catpaws was suppressed.

Before another ten minutes Sir Anthony was in the spacious and more modern office of the Postmaster-General, and just as he passed in, Mr. Bruce McAllister happened to pass out. Their glances met, and Sir Anthony eyed the long, lank Westerner with a look of surprise. "If that fellow, whoever he is," he said to himself, "was as broad as he's long, his arms would stretch around the world." Bruce, knowing the magnate, had the advantage, and, smiling to himself, he walked out of the building. All Anthony asked of the postmaster was that he should see that the contracts were made out properly and officially approved, but since the postmaster once had been a high-salaried lawyer for the Cosmopolitan Company, Anthony saw no reason why he should put any unreasonable objections in the way of making the American mail service the finest in the world.

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When Sir Anthony left the post office, he reflected that there were two or three more members of the Cabinet whom he wished to interview, but since the day was growing late and his time more and more limited, he resolved to walk back to the hotel and telephone them to come to see him, since Mohammed was finding it rather inconvenient to go to the mountain.

CHAPTER III

OUR HERO IS TEMPTED

WHY don't you squelch McAllister once and for all, Shaw?" Ommaney, chairman of the Judiciary Committee and friend to Sydney, glanced cautiously around the high-ceilinged, frescoed restaurant in the House side of the Capitol. It was practically empty, as yet, and noiseless; the colored waiters, handling silverware and dishes, made no audible sound as they moved over the heavy carpets to give a definite arrangement to the snow-white napery. Bruce's recent defense before the House of the McAllister Coupler bill—the one forcing the railroads to protect better the lives and limbs of their employees—called forth Ommaney's gentle interrogation.

"Let another toreador take his turn," replied Shaw; "I have been gored enough by that lean Western bull."

There was a wry expression on Sydney's handsome face when he paid his unwilling tribute to Bruce. It was an acknowledgment that he had reached the end of what he once considered his inexhaustible resources. As Franklin De Wolfe Fiske put it, Shaw could turn four corners into eight and if all the eight were blocked he could devise a ninth.

"There are other ways besides——"

"Don't I know?" returned Sydney, a little testily; "haven't I tried them all?"

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The "all" was a general term for Shaw's specific gift of gifts—his magnetism. It fairly streamed out of Shaw. He put his arm on yours confidingly, his melodious voice fell caressingly on your ear; with one graceful gesture he pulled the wool over your eyes and you were Shaw's from that moment on; let others say about him what they would. Bruce evidently was demagnetized.

Ommaney laughed; he enjoyed the predicament. "I had better luck myself. You're too deadly serious, Sydney, and you miss fire from your over-anxiety to hit. He's coming over to the place to-night to take a hand in a poker game. I worked for months before I even dropped the invitation."

"Had I better come?" Sydney's eyes gleamed. His qualities had been challenged.

"No, you fell flat," he jibed; "you had better let me handle him exclusively. That sort of a thing is an art all by itself."

"I suppose," put in Shaw dryly. "Only get to work quickly. If we don't, Sir Anthony will be standing on his head."

"My heavens!" whispered Ommaney drolly, his hands shooting upward in pretended horror; "in that case what a pile of money will roll out of his pocket!"

Shaw, his mind elsewhere, paid his friend's wit the questionable tribute of an absent smile. Gradually the restaurant filled, Congressmen nodding to Shaw familiarly, sought their places; with these guests sightseers and employees had the honor of rubbing elbows; a stray Senator or two condescending to permit the contact. Shaw and Ommaney shifted their conversation.

So it was the fates spun the threads that were to entangle Bruce McAllister, and so it was that very night, suspicious of no evil, he walked into the web—Ommaney's luxuriously

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furnished apartment in the Oldroyd building, which faces Thomas Circle. It was nine when our hero, guileless as the statue of General Thomas—sole adornment of the compact, winter-blighted park—entered the elevator and rode to the top of that gaunt marble hive of demifashionable humanity. A colored man bowed him in unctuously, showing him a comfortable chair in the parlor, suffused as with a red haze from the dim burning lamps. Sensitive souls may be susceptible to the insinuating charm of lights artistically mellowed, but Bruce was not of these.

He walked over to the window and looked down on Washington, tinted with the gold that a full moon poured down as from an inexhaustible censer aflame with its molten contents. He could descry the massy black outlines of the Virginian hills, the heights of Arlington, the sheen of the broad, rolling Potomac, seizing Nibelungen treasures and converting them, before they sank, to its own argent hue. In the wide free stretches of the Mall the chain of government buildings basked contentedly in the yellow glow, and farther along the Washington Monument, erect, lifting a majestic head to the undisturbed stars, stood soldier over the placid, sleeping night. Above it hung the moon, to adapt De Musset's striking simile, like the dot over an "i."

He had not been invited, as he soon discovered, to survey Washington by moonlight, for he had no sooner adjusted himself to the impression than Ommaney's right hand reached up to his shoulder, and he exclaimed with a little more than necessary fervor: "I'm awfully glad you came. The others aren't here yet—they're a little late."

Through clouds of cigar smoke Bruce surveyed Ommaney and found him, as seen through that extenuating medium, less sandy of hair, less freckled of complexion, less squat of figure. Ommaney's conversation started at some

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remote end of the world—the inconsequential anti-foreign riots in China—and worked Washingtonward as a mole works underground. Bruce followed, wondering, nodding his black head thrice to every once that his broad lips opened. Ommaney dodged through a complicated maze of words, disappeared, threatened to lose himself and his theme from sight, then he bobbed serenely to the surface with, “The Transoceanic promises to be a big thing, McAllister.”

Bruce nodded.

“The most substantial people in the country are back of it. It can’t help but be one of the great American institutions if we give it time and encouragement.”

“Chiefly encouragement,” said Bruce to himself, who had been broached before by tongues less subtly tempting than Ommaney’s on the Transoceanic. He suspected the Transoceanic was traveling devious ways, but for purposes of his own he craved more knowledge. He nibbled at Ommaney’s bait, encouraging him to dangle the line until he discovered the nature and mechanism of the hook.

“It ought to be a paying investment in time,” opined Bruce, the lit end of his cigar claiming his enigmatic gaze.

“Paying! Why, my dear man, paying is hardly the word, unless you want to call Senator Withrow’s mine a paying proposition. It’s what I call the opportunity of a lifetime. You run your shovel over the surface and pick up the gold! I don’t know—I’m not quite sure, but I think I know where I might corral a few shares for you at a figure ridiculously low. The party who owns them doesn’t know what he’s got.”

“The trouble is,” said Bruce, his blue-gray eyes leaving the cigar point and fastening on Ommaney, as if feeling out in advance, like so many fingers, for stock profits, “the trouble is, I’m short of funds just now.”

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"That can easily be arranged," said Ommaney. "It can't——"

"How?" our hero tripped him as he started on glibly ahead.

Seeing a bush, Ommaney beat around it, only to meet Bruce on the other side of it. "Well," he said, there being no egress, "I have influence with the officers of the company; they will credit you with stock, if I say so."

Then he lunged back to where Bruce had dragged him away. "It can't help but be a tremendous thing. It's sure to go this session, too. If it does, watch the stock soar! My dear man, you will have to get a ladder to reach it."

Bruce pursed his long lips as if to whistle, checked himself in that undignified pursuit, and satisfied the tendency with a puff at his cigar. "I don't know why," he said timidly, "but I was afraid of it. I had the idea that there was enough opposition against the bill to at least hold it over until next session."

"Don't you ever believe it!" exclaimed Ommaney. "The Senate will be for it to a man, and the House——"

The swarthy Bruce held him again. "But I hear the Postmaster-General and the Secretary of the Treasury——"

Ommaney bounded over the objection. "Don't you believe it. I have it from good authority that they will do all they can to assist Mr. Wyckoff."

Bruce's eyes dropped their lids to conceal the glance of astonishment mirrored there as he hastened to ask, "And the profits?"

"They will pour down a chute!" answered Ommaney in his boundless enthusiasm.

"The bill will be drawn to shut out competition and we shall be given a subsidy of a million and a half for carrying letters alone."

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"I see!" Bruce's long legs twined around the legs of his chair as if in excitement and he leaned forward to ask: "You can count on the Senate, I know; very good. But the House?"

"I know the men I have talked to think the bill will have a dead easy majority."

Bruce shook his head as if his skepticism were wavering and ready to be convinced. The radical wing of the Democracy was against it and in proof he mentioned this man and that. Certain stalwart Republicans were against it, as witness this man's name and that. Then, too, there were conservative Democrats who stood with the opposition.

Ommaney flew at doubt, shield lifted and spear leveled. "I'll prove it by facts, just cold, hard, solid facts." He rose, opened the drawer of the big oak table, seized a pad of paper bearing the government stamp, and said: "Well, let's see. I'll write out the list of the members who are for it. I'm no good at anything else, but I have a memory. Under the A's we have Abbot, Abercrombie, Ardmore—" and so did he assemble the faithful under their alphabetical banners.

As the ranks thickened, Bruce's interest mounted to a climax; he reached out an eager hand for the list and ran an avid eye down its serried columns.

"Well, who's right now, McAllister?"

The ringing of the bell took the answer from Bruce's lips. Ommaney rose, stretching out the hand of ownership for his property consigned for the moment to a prospective proselyte.

"Mr. Ardmore!" announced the unctuous tones of the colored man. Ommaney frowned; Bruce, as if in polite consideration of his host, confided the list to one of the faithful pockets of his coat. The host himself, relying on the for-

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tunes of the evening to restore to him his peculiar property, greeted Ardmore effusively.

Strange are the disparate epithets that cling to a man in these, our United States, for dapper Ardmore, who looked so beneficent and sentimental with his soft, brown eyes, his curly, white hair and his pointed white beard, is known as the "Hornet of the House." An inadvertent retort, for which his tongue, acting independently of his mind in a moment of excitement, must have been responsible, fastened the name on him. However, give a man the name of a hornet and beware of him, and Ardmore (who wouldn't have hurt the feelings of a fly, much less of a human being) was actually feared.

Ardmore remarked that it was cool and clear outside; Ommaney looked for the sting; then the bell rang and the unctuous one, playing like a poet with sonorous syllables, announced: "Miss Scollard, Mr. Collins, Miss Darcott, Mrs. O'Neill, Mr. Roberts."

Bruce had assumed that the festivities of the evening were to recognize but one of the sexes and learning with a shock of its catholicity, his hand made an involuntary movement toward his necktie and collar. Collins, who was from Chicago, and Roberts, who was from Pennsylvania, were two members whose reputations were just creeping over the right side of oblivion and throwing dust into the public eye. Both were serving third terms. The women were luxurious and stately creatures, ornate in the matter of jewels and dress, painted and powdered just sufficiently to heighten rather than hide their natural charms, which were not a few. Bruce, without any great flattery to the virtues of experience, was trying to fix their status, asking himself while he was being introduced if they came from one of the departments or from the greater half-world that edges it.

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Miss Scollard, a blonde, regular-featured beauty, engaged him. In order to break the ice, so to say, she plied the weather and then proved her versatility and erudition by conversing fluently on travels and sociology. Did not Bruce consider Washington provincial as compared to New York? Our hero, as we have learned before, not being absolutely sex proof, was finding that these minutes were not altogether devoid of a certain indefinable attraction.

Other men and women entered; the parlor of the apartment filled just sufficiently to render it seductively human and warmly alive. The lights burned dim, the conversation hummed soothingly, and our hero was more and more pleased that Miss Scollard was devoting herself to him signally and alone. The man passed a tray whereon glimmered varicolored liquids, reflecting various hues. Sea-green in color was the one of Miss Scollard's choice, while Bruce waved a denying hand. He did not drink; his explanation savored of an apology.

"Not even with me?" The *crème-de-menthe* touched her mouth like a caress and the long-lashed eyes looked enticingly on him as if circumstances and not choice restrained the lips to the glass.

"With you, if anybody"—the answer was obvious; he shifted the theme; she hinted at it adroitly again. He was—oh, fortunately for him!—no more susceptible to the siren's plea than the glass her jeweled fingers clasped enticingly.

Ommaney led the way into the Dutch dining room, paneled and shelved with Flemish oak. The players seated themselves at the large round table. Miss Scollard and our hero found themselves side by side. She dropped her handkerchief, his long body stooped to pick it up; their fingers crossed and she whispered flattering words. The tray made itself conspicuous again, its colors standing out in a thick fog

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of tobacco smoke like the illumined colors in a druggist's window on a dark night. Again came the invitation to drink; again the refusal, equally positive though more round-about. The handkerchief dropped on the floor a second time.

Miss Scollard nonchalantly, as if to set a good example, lit a cigarette; the other women followed suit.

"I declare," laughed Mrs. O'Neill, who was the oldest although far from the least attractive of the women, "I don't see what good it is to have me here for a chaperon if you are going to do this sort of a thing right under my nose." Everybody laughed save Ardmore; who was ogling the dashing Mrs. O'Neill with a serious mien, more sentimental than waspish.

Chips rattled; the glasses circulated; there was the gliding noise of cards in continuous motion; the game was on in earnest. Bruce was looking at his hand of cards speculatively when Collins, of Chicago, who sat across from him, sang out:

"I say, McAllister, did you know that the Hammer-smiths have rented the Lassiter residence on Du Pont Circle for the season?"

"No, I didn't."

"Being from Chicago I thought the news would interest you."

The observant, perspicacious Ommaney noticed that Bruce's expression wavered, turning as it were inwardly, away from the cards in his hand to what was going on in some far recess of his mind. Miss Scollard, who was less perspicacious and more sensitive, felt that from then on our attenuated swarthy hero was slipping through the charms she was trying to draw tighter and tighter around him.

Bruce played worse than a novice and was conscious of his bungling at so much the error, but still he noticed with a

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shock damaging to logic that his piles of chips were growing skyward and tilting earthward like the tower of Pisa.

He became suspicious of good fortune, quarreling with her. "Somebody," he said to himself, playing on, "is letting me win." Ommaney's method of removing financial obstacles—his phrase "that can be easily arranged"—forced Bruce to become contemplative.

It came likewise to his observation that Ardmore's pile was matching his own in architectural design, and he concluded that it must have been by the same freak of good fortune, since that venerable statesman's mind was more occupied with the marblelike shoulders of the dazzling Mrs. O'Neill than with the cards in his hand.

When the game came to an end, Bruce was startled by the sum of gold into which his leaning tower of ivory chips might be converted. "I notice," he spoke up suddenly, fingering the spoils and glancing around, "that the ladies must foot the losses. I'm no Chevalier Bayard of the card table, but still I don't like the idea that our winnings should come from the losses of the fair sex. I leave my share for the young woman who sat beside me and cheered me on to victory."

Wishing to be overcome, it was easy to resist her mild protest, and he remained deaf to the objections of the astonished Ommaney. Ardmore's brows knit and he plucked his snow-white mustache and beard in evident dismay lest he be expected to follow suit. He was shrewd enough to detect the cause of Bruce's strange card-table conduct, and he compromised with his conscience by promising to add a jewel to the collection of the fair Mrs. O'Neill, who had not left his side during the thick of the battle.

It was almost time for the moon to retire and make way for the sun when Bruce left the Oldroyd apartments

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and strolled with Ardmore slowly along New York Avenue toward home. Ardmore's legs, like his emotions, were wavering. "I'll tell you what, McAllister," he lamented one minute, "I think if I had a little more nerve I might have made a conquest of Mrs. O'Neill. Magnificent woman, wasn't she?" and the next minute, "I feel ashamed of myself, McAllister; I ought to be taken out and horse-whipped. I didn't do what was right by poor Mrs. Ardmore."

And when they passed the Egyptian façade of the Hall of the Ancients—this reminder of a dead civilization may have made him sad—he burst forth again. "I wish I had your strength of conviction, McAllister. I admire it. I started out that way. I meant to be that way. I ought not to have taken that money. I know what it was meant for, but still, when you reckon it up, it's all according to the fortunes of the gaming table."

Bruce, accrediting himself with no superior morality, comforted the white-haired man whose arm clung to his arm, whose round, bulging head bobbed at his shoulder. The balm served only to bring a maudlin tear to his eye, and when they passed the marble Carnegie library in Mount Vernon Square he broke out once more:

"Especially just now, I ought to have stood firm as the stones in that building; because I'm with you, McAllister, on that child-labor proposition—I have children of my own, a little boy and a girl, the dearest that ever were—you ought to see them—I'm with you, I say, on the child-labor bill, and I want to be able to tell them all so and defy the devil. Sir Anthony needn't think, by God, that because I come from a district run by one of his bosses, he can order me about. See here, look at the way he writes me."

He fumbled about in his pocket, drew forth a package

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of letters, torn envelopes, and memoranda, and sifted them under the steady glare of the arc light.

The operation reminded Bruce of the document in evidence he had secured from Ommaney before the festivities began. An expectant hand plunged into his pocket, fondled it, and found there bleak nothingness. It searched again. Nothingness! Anxiously it rifled other pockets and came forth empty as it had entered. Even so, thoughts ransacked his mind in search of an explanation of its disappearance and discovered none. Ardmore distracted him.

"Here it is; read it for yourself, McAllister. See the way the plutocracy is ordering about the servants of the people put in office to preserve a sacred trust!"

More out of good nature than desire, rather to please the inebriated Ardmore than to satisfy himself, Bruce opened the folded sheet of note that the Wasp, more lucky than he had been, had driven to cover. He caught the signature of A. Wyckoff at the bottom of it and glancing up toward the top of the communication, he saw it bore in raised letters the superscription of the Hotel Arlington. The few uneven lines read: "I failed after several attempts to reach you by telephone or messenger to-day. I want to say to you emphatically that the business interests of America demand that the McAllister Anti-Child Labor bill must not be reported out of committee."

"Hm!" was Bruce's sole comment.

"What do you say to that?" asked Ardmore. "Are eighty millions of people to be commanded by the will of one man?"

"Supposing," suggested Bruce, "you let me keep the letter. I think I might——"

"No," said the invertebrate Ardmore, "a letter is a sacred trust and I look upon it as such. I revere its confi-

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dences; only I don't intend that the powers of the plutocracy shall run me. They never have run James Whitney Ardmore and they never shall."

Bruce was unwilling to take advantage of a man the worse for liquor and he merely resolved to argue the question at some future time with Ardmore, now he satisfied himself with the caution: "Take care of the letter, Ardmore; see to it that it doesn't pass out of your hands."

"As I love the suffering little children of the land, McAllister, it shall not. If that letter will ever be of any service to you in getting so meritorious a bill through the committee on which both you and I have the honor to serve, you have only to count on me at any hour of the day or night. On my word of honor!"

CHAPTER IV

THE SPEAKER'S DAUGHTER

THE sixteen privileged personages that sat around the table of the oblong frescoed room occupied by the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce found considerable amusement in watching Sydney P. Shaw dodge behind this rule and take refuge within that, as he was steadily forced into the open by the shrewd attacks of the lank Westerner. Sydney feared that the child-labor law would be wrenched from his grasp, or from that of his henchman, whom in his perplexity, he called upon to protect it. Under the circumstances he was justified, perhaps, in losing his temper, which he rarely did. McAllister's persistency, his way of wounding with a joke that won laughter from all but the object of it, were enough to make patience on a monument change a placid expression for a frown. Finally, Sydney's tongue slipped its control but clung to its suavity, and he called the gentleman from Illinois a name a shade or two more severe than the rules would permit, and the one so nominated cared to stand.

Bruce retorted in kind, in a way that made Sydney quiver inwardly, and thereto he added the words, like so many feathers that were to wing the barb forward and drive it home:

"It seems, anyway, that the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce is more in control of a certain power outside this chamber than the chairman himself."

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"What does the gentleman from Illinois mean to insinuate by that?"

"I insinuate nothing. I put my remark in the form of a charge, and state that at least one member of this committee has received a letter from Anthony Wyckoff commanding him to do his utmost to prevent this bill from leaving this room."

Sydney blanched slightly; his lids dropped over his eyes, curtainwise, half hiding them from view. "Will the gentleman from Illinois say which member of the committee it was that received such a letter?"

"Certainly. It was the gentleman from Virginia."

There was a craning of necks toward the chair in which the Wasp usually sat, but the white-haired romantic Ardmore was not in his seat, and therefore, not being as ubiquitous physically as morally, could not be seen.

"I move you," put in Ommaney, "the gentleman from Virginia being absent, that this committee do now adjourn and that the charge made by the gentleman from Illinois be taken up at the next regular meeting on Tuesday."

The motion carried, and a moment afterwards Shaw and Ommaney stood behind closed doors to discuss the situation, which thirteen other more or less excitable gentlemen were doing in various parts of the Capitol.

"Well?" asked Ommaney sibilantly.

"Well, the first thing to do is to put hands on Ardmore and get that letter." Sydney paid his respects to the Wasp in a fashion that showed he would risk the danger of laying hold of it for the pleasure of plucking its sting.

"McAllister may have the letter in his pocket."

"That's to be found out." Again Sydney commended Ardmore's secrecy in the most laudatory terms, and he then passed on to compliment Anthony Wyckoff for his careful-

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ness. "I warned him not to write any letters right in this room, but he knew best—he always knows best—and I suppose I no more than got out of here than he made a fool of himself on paper."

"The whole country will hear of this?"

"In less than an hour. The newspapers will double lead it. 'The Government Bulldozed by Sir Anthony!' It will stir up more sentiment in favor of the Child-Labor bill than fifty McAllisters with all their folderoy could do in a lifetime. The walls of this room aren't strong enough to keep this bill here much longer; if they do, McAllister's dear common people will tear them down and pitch us out of the window." Sydney mopped his brow. "Wyckoff will be crazy. But I can't help it. It's his own fault." He saw two horns of the dilemma; himself being tossed through one window by the common people, his prospects for the presidency being tossed out of the other. He cursed lustily. Anthony, Bruce, and Ardmore were the trinity to whom he paid his quaint homage.

"But what's to be done, Sydney?"

"Find Ardmore."

And find him Shaw did that very night, although his lieutenant, who devoted the whole of the day and evening to the task, failed signally. Luck, it would seem, favors the deserving, for it would have been no less a personage than the deity herself who brought these two together at the reception given in the Hammersmith residence.

The society columns of the Washington papers, presciently cognizant of greatness in embryo, numbered our hero among those present. It was eight o'clock when his herdic drew to a halt before the marble mansion in Farragut Square, to see which the admiral needed not to have lifted his glasses. Bruce walked under the iron canopy of the *porte cochère*,

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climbed the white marble staircase, made warm by the glow of lights, colorful rugs, and tropical plants. Before long, he was paying his respects to Mr. and Mrs. Hammersmith, and then his hand rested in that of Inez. The long line curved ahead toward the silver-laden refreshment table, pushed on from behind by those eager to pass host and hostess and reach the fleshpots. The big house and its furnishings, unobtrusively luxurious, was subdued to a background for the crowd that thronged it; and one was far less conscious of its own magnificence than of the brilliant toilets it threw into relief, the sheen of bare shoulders, the flash of vari-colored jewels, from modest pearls to the insistent gleam of sapphire, ruby and amethyst, loudly assertive of their own hues.

"I'm very glad to see you," Inez said. "The last time we met was at Springfield in the governor's house."

"And the time before that in your house in Chicago when Speaker Fiske was there."

"I see you have not forgotten."

"Not even the words that passed between us," he said.

"When I am through with my duties here I will seek you out and there will be more words to be memorized. Don't run off, will you?" she asked.

"Does the magnet speak so to the steel?" he asked in return.

He was about to move on, carrying with him a picture of her as she stood thus, firmly outlined in statuesque lines under her pale blue gown, when she added:

"Let me introduce you to my best of friends, Mrs. Ten Eyck."

Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck smiled upon him, voicing her pleasure at meeting the friend of her father. "I feel as if I had known you a long time," she said. Her graciousness,

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freed of effort, lifted Bruce to the standing of an acquaintanceship long established.

Hers was a golden and a radiant presence, and he who named her "the golden Georgia" must have had an unerring gift for adjectives. Her thick gold tresses, graced as with moonlight, softened to femininity the large face whose features might have struck one otherwise as being too masculine in their pronounced strength. Despite her graciousness, the impression Bruce carried away was that of one born to command.

Bruce, avoiding the trains of gowns that rippled wavelike beneath him, picked out his way along the marble floor. His thoughts were with Inez, and absently he passed diplomats, congressmen, Cabinet members, soldiers and sailors high in rank, giving not even a cursory glance to the pagoda-like structure that the Korean minister carried around with him, the black silk cap that personified the wealth and power of the Celestial empire, nor the fez of Turkey, when a hand shot forth from out of the crowd and caught him by the arm. Addison greeted him: "Hello, Bruce, old chap! My, but I'm glad to see you. You're a sight for sore eyes. There comes old Senator Freeze with one of his shriveled stories—let's dodge him." He led Bruce to the head of the Caen stone staircase, just beyond the reach of the crush. A huge Italian jar—it had done service for a well in days long since past—filled with American beauties, shaded them from the glow of the electrics. "Yes, Bruce," he went on, "I'm awfully glad to see you. I came from Chicago to attend this reception. I don't care much about it, do you? More or less of a bore. It doesn't seem to me that they left many out. Well, that's the tendency nowadays; everybody wants to be just as good as anybody else and it doesn't make any difference who your parents were. Tell me, Bruce, where

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is it all going to end? It reminds me of the reception we had at our house when they sent me to the council." He laughed heartily, shaking his straw-colored head.

"Do you like the council any better?"

"Not so very much. Still it pleases the family, so I keep on. You have been doing famously yourself, haven't you? I've been reading all about it in the papers and I tell you what, I'm proud of you. Of course, I don't take much stock in your talk about the poor and all that sort of rubbish—I suppose it's just politics with you and I don't blame you for it—but you're doing famously all the same. Everybody says so. Excuse me, there's Ruth Wyckoff, I'll have to leave you to speak to her. I'll be back in a moment." Addison left the harbor he had found for his friend and pushed out midway in the swirling torrent of humanity, scurrying this way and that through the great reception rooms and the halls.

Bruce stood for a moment undecided whether to remain in seclusion where he was, or to navigate across the shimmering sea of silks toward the dining room, where Edward Donovan Butler, his eyes peering through his glasses like those of a hawk on wing, espied Bruce. Butler, lifting his arm, thereby nearly depriving the worshiping Korean of his pagoda, waved a hand of recognition. He made toward Bruce slowly, stopping to shake hands and pass a word with this dignitary and that.

Fate, propitious to their friendship, had induced the *Chicago Democrat* to send little Butler to Washington as its correspondent a year or so before Bruce's arrival. It was to prepare the way for Bruce, he said, deeply devoted as ever to the cause his comrade of the pit and he had espoused in common.

"Holy High Jinks!" shouted Butler, reaching Bruce at

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length, his face elongated to a superlative degree, "but you've done it now! You've given the whole country a fillip sure enough! I've been hunting all over creation for you. That's all people are talking about to-night, is that letter. I saw Anthony Wyckoff himself here talking with Shaw. He probably came over from New York on a special train. I told you to wait and take it easy, didn't I?"

"I waited until the ——"

"Confound the psychological moment. The question is can you deliver the goods?"

"Of course I can, Ed."

"Have you got the letter?"

"No, but Ardmore has."

"Ardmore's got it; that's rich, that is! And you've banked your whole fortune on a letter that Ardmore has in his pocket? Well, supposing he refuses to show it, then what?"

"He promised me on his word of honor——"

"I wouldn't give you *that* for the promise of that wobbly, weak-kneed, sentimental old idiot."

"You're excited, Ed."

"Well, I'll stay excited, too, until that letter is in your pocket. Have you seen Ardmore? He's here somewhere. I just saw him come in a few minutes ago."

"He'll find me then," smiled the confident Bruce, slipping his hands into his pockets.

Butler's long jaw elongated, but Bruce grasping his arm affectionately, stopped his ejaculation with the remark: "Say, Ed., Fiske's daughter has a remarkably interesting face. You know everybody; tell me something about her."

"Oh, she's a better politician than her father!" started Butler in his nervous energetic manner. "She was born here in Washington and bred in politics. Her mother was

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an Italian, who cut quite a figure in diplomacy in her day. They say Fiske wasn't happy with her; she ended in some peculiar way; but I don't know about that. Georgia Fiske herself was educated over in Europe and didn't come back until she was sixteen. They tell me the President's wife took a great fancy to her. The old girl came from the raw West and didn't know the proper way of running things and Georgia used to help her out. It was born in her. They say the little minx got to running things too well, for she soon wormed herself into the President's favor and the politicians had to reckon with her. There are several men in Washington now, who were nothing but clerks then, who owe their high position to the wires Georgia Fiske pulled, when she was hardly out of short dresses. She was a power behind the throne all right, and naturally she grew tired of that and she wanted to get on the throne herself. Those who know say Fiske didn't have the presidential bee until she put it in his bonnet. He was Chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means then, and she kept on telling him how much abler he was than the President, and how much better he was fitted to hold the job."

Butler paused suddenly, waving a hand to a familiar face in the throng. "There's Cummings of the *Telegram*. I want to speak to him. I'll finish the story some other time." Bruce, knowing that delay would leave his curiosity only half satisfied, held him.

"Well," went on Butler reluctantly, "do you know she finally got her father to believe that if he didn't land in the White House his life would be a failure? She played on his weaknesses and cajoled him into thinking he was predestined for the job. Before he knew it she had him wound up in a plot that just about split up a cabinet. It raised quite a scandal at the time, and that's the real reason why Fiske

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didn't take the job of Secretary of State when they offered it to him."

"But where does Ten Eyck come in?"

"That's a fact: I nearly forgot. Ten Eyck was a former Senator from Massachusetts, a manufacturer, one of the richest in the country at the time, and Georgia Fiske married him when he was old enough to be her grandfather. They say Fiske was bitterly opposed to it and that he fought it right up to the last moment; but she is just as hard-headed as Fiske himself and she had her way. Her reason? Oh, I suppose she wanted the power that money would give her to help her father into the presidency. You can't run a presidential campaign without money, nor a convention either."

Butler paused, gazing through the throng as if in search for somebody, and Bruce asked, "What became of Ten Eyck?"

"I don't know. My knowledge stops short with the fact that he died just after he and Georgia Fiske were divorced. There was quite a scandal, although it was hushed up pretty well. Sydney P. Shaw was caught in it somewhere, so one of the boys told me, but with his usual foxiness he dug from under. I understand that Fiske's bitter ironical manner dates from the divorce. He felt somehow that he had sacrificed his daughter's future and good name to an empty ambition, and now he holds himself in duty bound to gain her heart's desire for her." He ended suddenly. "There's Cummings again!"

He vanished, waving his hand like a drowning man about to disappear under water. Bruce laughed, and hunger calling him again, he made for the middle of the stream. The strong hand of Fiske clutched him. "Well, McAllister, a man who laughs at himself usually nourishes the illusion that he is smiling good-naturedly at the mistakes of the wise."

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They sought the shelter of the Italian well, from the depths of which peeped the full-plumed roses, their foliage hanging caressingly toward Fiske's light brown hair. A Washington gossip remarked of Fiske that his immense frame—he was a full inch and a half shorter than Bruce but far more solid—was only a servant to his majestic head; a sort of a bodyguard that carried the invincible weapon around for him.

It was a fine head, to be admired in life, to be marveled at when its proportions should be immortalized in marble. His jaws were set on iron springs, slow to shut, slower still to open. Shaggy eyebrows gave a fierce and firm expression to his deep-set gray eyes that looked out at you as from a cave that it was worth your life to enter. Fiske's eyes were the watchdogs of his mind. His complexion, bronzed and dark, seemed tinged with iron, and his wrinkled and furrowed face was more akin to iron than flesh. Moreover, irony was his habitual method of conversation. He spoke to bruise or he held his peace. The hammer symbolized the man. Our gossip said that Fiske's coat of arms ought to be a hammer dexterous crashing down on heads sinister emblazoned on a field of fools.

"You forced Shaw's hand at any rate," said Fiske to Bruce after they had chatted for a while. "I don't suppose all the king's horses can keep the bill back of the door. Henceforth it's beyond the reach of even my power," he laughed ironically.

"I counted on its forcing the issue," said Bruce.

"But see to it, McAllister, that you get the letter." The big Speaker slipped his hands into his pockets and looked on the crowd around him with a sort of Shakespearean scorn. Fiske hated the mob. His ideal form of government would have been a republic with an autocrat to forbid voting.

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"And supposing," asked Bruce tentatively, when Fiske looked as if he would pass on, "the bill gets on the floor?"

"I may tell you my opinion of it then, and I may prefer to reserve my judgment until a future date," he answered ambiguously.

Fiske, son of a farmer though he was, buffeted by fortune though he had been, was an aristocrat through and through, and he had small sympathy for Bruce's point of view. For years he had represented vested interests in court and he had naturally assumed their attitude. He accepted the life and manners of the rich folk who paid him so handsomely as being eminently fit. That capital could do no grievous wrong was one of the cardinal points of Fiske's creed, and he was ever ready to praise the humanitarianism of the capitalists for the patience and kindness with which they met the unreasonable demands of childish labor. He was broad enough, however, to forgive labor, saying it knew not what it did one half the time, being so indolent.

"When you get Shaw cornered," ended Fiske with a drawl, moving off, "come and call me, McAllister, and I'll watch you nail the lid down."

"Yes, Sydney's slippery!"

"Slippery!" Fiske's face settled firmly. "He moves like the snake. I was born to hate all creeping things, McAllister."

The quarrel between the Speaker and Shaw was of long standing; it owed its origin to that fundamental difference in temperament between honesty and dishonesty, and the Speaker was reckless enough to express his opinion of men regardless of consequences. In politics an opinion expressed is an enemy made and Fiske was politician enough to know that, and man enough not to care. He was that oddity in American life—a successful politician without policy. Abil-

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ity had lifted him to where he was; he scorned to lean on the shoulder of craft, compromise and deceit for advancement.

Bruce barely stepped beyond the shadow of the rose-filled well when he heard Ardmore's familiar voice in soft expostulation floating down from above him, and looking up he saw the gentleman from Virginia seated with Sydney P. Shaw and Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck on a marble bench in a corner of the broad landing of the staircase. Sydney's voice, murmuring scarcely audible words, gradually died away in the trio. Georgia's flutelike tones supplanted him. A second later Shaw left, mingling with the crowd below. His figure was distinguished among even so many distinguished men and women.

CHAPTER V

THE CITY OF HOPE

THE soft glow of the electrics, subdued to an inviting timidity, the heartier hospitality of the red marble Languedoc buffet and mantel, the gleam of the silverware and its inner fine fragrance, were steadily attracting rivulets of people from the main stream into the dining room. Bruce finally found his way into this Mecca of the hungry and he just had started to regale himself when Inez entered, leaning on the arm of a young man whose broad straight shoulders called for attention before his round inconspicuous head. She saw Bruce and smiled, guiding her escort in his direction and introducing him as Lieutenant Glenn Dodson of the navy. The lieutenant's conversation was by no means as broad as his shoulders, nor as deep as his chest. He ran to monosyllables.

A few moments afterwards Inez directed a retreat through the crowded rooms to a more secluded corner, the willing Bruce at her heels. They found the marble bench, clasped armlike by a sheltering curve in the stairs, occupied earlier in the evening by Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck and Ardmore, but centuries ago perhaps the mute confidant of Florentine intrigue and loves. A Persian rug thrown across the balustrade dropped its rich folds toward the marble, and by the sharp contrast it made between color and the lack thereof, threw the nook into a sort of Oriental relief. The strong

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statuesque lines of Inez's figure, her nude shoulders, her well-poised head, were detached from surroundings that refused, as it were, to harmonize in order to absorb her in the decorative scheme.

"Now," she said, seating herself, "we are in a place where we can talk."

"I can do that anywhere—to you."

"What, has Washington already had that effect on you?" She turned her brown eyes full upon him. She wondered why she found no longer the sheer ugliness that previous experience and impressions made her expect to find again. Use and acquaintanceship, like a kindly artist, had softened for her critical glances the ugliness of his features, the coarseness of his facial lines. To her he had become picturesquely ugly, like a pile of rugged rock, like a stanch hill in a bleak landscape. To be ugly in that fashion is a distinction—one that few crave.

His wandering wits rallied to answer her exclamation with, "Do you infer the farther one leaves Chicago behind the farther one is removed from the primitive virtues?"

So they sparred for a while, bridging over the awkward chasm dug by a period of separation. In him, as in life itself, she still retained an avid intellectual interest, not unmixed with the promptings of curiosity. His own reason for attachment to her was not so conscious, and it may have been the deeper in that the finger of analysis did not fall so pat upon it. The charm of her beauty exerted over his senses was considerable, but there was something that was as widely separated from her mere beauty as he himself from her who lured him on. There was also in him an eager desire to overcome the coldness she interposed between him and his rising affection. Had each never seen the other again after their third or fourth meeting their romance might have ended

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in curiosity unsatisfied; as it was now, curiosity satisfied bade fair to end in romance. And finally we believe in the law of romance, however it may differ from that of the spheres, that two bodies moving in different orbits are often more attracted than repelled.

"I presume," he said, directing his aimless conversation toward an end, "that it was the desire to play upon a bigger stage that brought you to Washington."

"Yes, my own desire and Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck's appeal. Do you know her? Don't you admire her? Isn't she wonderful? She visited us when her father was trying his lawsuit against one by the name of McAllister. She won us all over so easily. She was born to direct and lead. When I see her and watch her and listen to her I would give anything to be like her!"

He would not have believed her capable of such enthusiastic admiration for another, and it may have awakened in him a pang of regret that it was squandered on a member of her own sex. Fearing that she might come under the selfish sway of the intriguing Georgia, there arose in him a faint warning cry, clumsily worded, but this a second thought, annoyed by its very clumsiness, suppressed.

"I don't know whether the stage you have chosen is greater than the one you have left," he said, scorning an obvious enough compliment to shift the conversation forward.

"And why do you say so?"

The question evoked a discourse on a theme over which his love of speculation had played for months. To him, Washington was a city of swaggering negations, devoted entirely to generating the power that was used to turn the gigantic machinery of production situated afar. It was merely a bureau that permitted the rest of the United States to work, and receiving that permission, the big men of the

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country hastened home to put it into operation. In a land of prodigious activities Washington, capital of the nation, was the only city that impressed one with a sense of leisure. It had atmospheres, diplomatic, legislative, scientific, naval, military, but in a compelling sense it had no atmosphere at all. He ended by saying that thousands were drawn to it as a city of hope, and departed from it crushed and heart-broken as from a city of despair.

"Surely your darker view of Washington is not justified by the way the city has treated you. From all I hear on all sides you are making rare headway."

"Beyond my most sanguine expectations; which reminds me of Isaac Newton, the ignorant old Quaker who was Secretary of Agriculture under Lincoln. When his expenses ran too high he was called on for an explanation by the committee. Newton spluttered, talked pedantically and said finally: 'Yes, sir; the expenses have been very great, marvelously so, I may say; indeed, sir, they have succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectations.'"

"I insist on taking you seriously, despite yourself. You have put the whole country on edge. Yourself, the charges you raised in the committee room, and Mr. Ardmore's letter are the sole topics of this evening's conversation. I might have been bored had it been about another. I find it exciting as it is. I judge the letter of great importance."

"My future and the future of the anti-child labor bill depend upon it."

"And you have this letter in your possession?" Her brown eyes fastened on his swarthy face as if she were eager to share in a confidence not divulged to the rest of the world.

He considered a second. "I put confidence in you. Mr. Ardmore has it."

"And if he will not surrender it?"

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"I have his promise."

"And if he breaks that promise?"

"I had considered that emergency as out of the question. It might make me ridiculous and doom my child-labor bill to failure."

"And is it very dear to your heart?"

"As the blood that warms it."

He made his knowledge of child-labor conditions her own, summing up for her in minutes the results that hours had amassed for him. (He marched before her eyes, opening wide at the vigor of his speech and the intensity of his feeling, a procession of the children of his people, pale, hollow-eyed, driven by the whip of Greed along the hideous road that lies between the homes of want and the mills of Mammon.) The light of passion struck here and there, illuminating a wan face among the thousands that composed the throng, throwing a sinister gleam on the sorry details of the life of children that know no childhood.

A light wavered over her brown eyes, and had he been less absorbed in what he was saying, more watchful of its effect on her, he might have observed that her countenance had in it no suggestion of coldness, that it was warmed as from the glow of some inner spiritual fire that his words had kindled.

It was somehow as if a little child had led her into poverty's undesirable kingdom. She saw its tatterdemalion hordes step out of the cover of books where comfort had found it convenient to confine them, and take on a personal blood and flesh existence, each one in the mass as sentient as Inez Hammersmith herself, with like organs and dimensions that craved as ardently life's boons, but whom a blind law of chance had subjected to life's miseries.

She had, too, ceased to weigh him in the scales of

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sincerity, her very coolness of intellect and her coldness of temperament helping her to see that his statements were of themselves false or true, and that to cry him demagogue was another way, invented by comfort, of making a worthy doctrine ridiculous by belittling the character of its expounder.

There had been in her a sort of revulsion and the process had turned face and was acting the other way about. The doctrines, weighed in the scales of sincerity, were not found wanting, and therefore she was inclined to believe that the preacher of them was lifted from demagogism by the very sanctity of what he taught. If one entered the temple, one was warmed by its heat and lit by its light. Moreover, being human, outside influences were having their effect on Inez. Even those who denounced Bruce most bitterly praised his sincerity, and a cynical world pronounced him mistaken but honest. The steady pressure of Inez's fairness forced her stubbornness of intellect and of pride to loosen its hold on what it first had clung to, and grasp the less tempting but more just position.

"I wish that I might help you," was her only comment when at length she spoke.

"Help me, or my cause?" he asked, tempted by the warmth of voice that showed plainly that her interest, like an eager explorer, had passed out of the cold domain of intellect into the sunnier regions of feeling.

"How can I separate the two?" she was about to ask. But rising she said instead: "Other duties call me, some of them quite urgent." It was as if she, despite herself, would impress upon him the fact that her attitude toward him was altogether impersonal.

Somewhat nonplused, he left her to begin his quest, recklessly postponed, for Ardmore; and he found that gentleman

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as he was marching up the stairway in search for his hat and coat. Bruce, on the same errand, slipped an arm in his.

"You know what's happened, Ardmore, of course. I see the army of the opposition has sent its cohorts after you. I shall need the letter Tuesday."

"What letter?" Ardmore's legs, like his voice, wobbled.

"What letter!" Bruce felt something give way inside of him. "The Wyckoff letter, the one you showed me the night coming home from——"

"Oh, yes, McAllister, I remember now. The fact is, you see, you put me in a delicate position, in a very delicate position. Shaw's my friend and you're my friend, and I don't want to do anything that will reflect——"

"I know all that, but you promised. The whole fate of the child-labor bill is locked up in that letter now. I'm simply compelled to make good or make a fool of myself." He drew Ardmore in a corner of the hallway and appealed to his sympathies for the little children, with all the eloquence at his command.

Ardmore's eye watered. "Count on me, McAllister. My word of honor! The children of America shan't suffer. No! no! I should feel as if I had wronged my little boy and girl—beautiful children, by God! Count on me! I'll deliver the letter in the committee room on Tuesday."

"You promise faithfully?"

"My word of honor, McAllister. Dismiss it from your mind. Forget it, my son. Ardmore of Virginia says so."

Just before midnight, on the point of taking his departure, Bruce faced the wrought-iron and glass doors of the spacious exit. Behind and in front of him on the staircase was the crowd of men and women, yawning, weary, their festive garments out of joint with their fatigued bearing. Outside

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he descried a line of equipages moving across the lighted surface of the *porte cochère* like big black shadows, and the chug-chug of starting automobiles could be heard discordantly above the murmur of voices bidding a good-night, one to the other.

In front of him Bruce espied the massive frame of Fiske, and just behind and a little to one side of her father, he caught the shimmer of his daughter's golden head—a little more golden by contrast with the white scarf thrown across it with studied carelessness. Near her, dancing the last round of obsequious attention, was the gentleman from Virginia. Bruce, his mind busied with the disentangling of the evening's varied impressions, was quite sure it was Georgia's voice that half whispered, half said caressingly to Ardmore:

“You will surely keep your promise and call on Monday.”

Afterwards Bruce insisted that his fancy had tricked him and that the discomfiting elf had whispered those words in the ears of his imagination.

CHAPTER VI

THE CAVERN OF DESPAIR

THERE was a broad smile on the weak face of Mr. Ardmore of Virginia as he passed down the brown-stone stairs of Speaker Fiske's house in Scott Circle. The smile grew broader and broader and extended into a grin when he looked up at the bronze statues of the Mercuries, bearing torches, stationed on the two big round posts at the foot of the outside stairs.

"Quite a woman; a magnificent woman; by God, a Venus and Minerva of a woman!" he said to himself, stirred to a flight of Websterian oratory when he passed the statue of the great Daniel, eloquently still now. His enthusiasm sought superlatives beyond which no man could go, as he walked in Sixteenth Street toward the cozy White House. Its high, stark Ionic columns looked good-naturedly from their eminence down the sloping thoroughfare.

A moment afterwards, Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck entered her carriage, which had been waiting in front of the house, and she drove past General Scott, seated uncomfortably for eternity on his bronze steed, and she whirled by way of Connecticut Avenue over to Farragut Square where she intended to call for Inez Hammersmith. She was anxious that her bays make good time, for at three she had a sitting with a portrait artist to whose studio Inez had promised to accompany her, and it lacked but a few minutes of that hour now.

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At a little after four Cupid had calendared for her a tryst with Shaw.

She was somewhat perplexed lest she find it difficult to give a plausible excuse that would rid her in time of Inez's company and let her keep punctually her appointment with Sydney. But the shadow of a frown that crossed her broad forehead gave way before her enthralling smile, just as everything in the world outside of her gave way before it, and she doubted not at all that she would be able to accomplish these inconsiderable trifles.

She leaned back in her victoria as contented with life as if she were one of the sunbeams that danced through the air jubilantly, doing its share to make the day perfect. She was content, for she knew that she had accomplished that which would make Shaw inexpressibly happy. She pictured his broad smile and she hung amorously on the lips of it. She clasped the rattlesnake-skin purse with its intertwining gold G. F. T., as if it were his hand that was to bid her welcome. To its keeping she had confided the Wyckoff letter, carefully sealed in a small white envelope, that she had cajoled Ardmore, uncertain of himself, into giving her.

She smiled when she recalled the tactics that had won the victory. Her thoughts concerning that vacillating individual were far from lifting him and his abilities, as he had her and her attributes, into Olympia to rank with the gods. "Folly," she was thinking, "only comes to maturity, along with the rest of our faculties, in old age." Both he and she were just in judging each other. Folly had fallen captive to Venus's flattering words and seductive smiles, while Minerva had cajoled him easily into surrendering to her the precious document that she wished to give Mars.

The occupants of conspicuous turnouts speculated concerning the nature of the cause that wreathed the face of the

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golden Georgia in smiles; but curiosity gave way to admiration for the wonderful face so enwreathed. She could—so she thought as she rode along and felt the silent homage of the city—bend Washington to her purposes quite as readily as she had bent the foolish Ardmore.

The studio that stood, so to say, in the crossway of Georgia's day's journey was located on the first floor of a dingy, rickety, old-style, Southern building in Seventeenth Street, just opposite the War, State, and Navy building. It belonged to that celebrated artist, Mr. Rossiter Rembrandt Dickinson. And strange and yet not so strange to say, two stories over his head was the studio of Elaine McAllister, who had moved to Washington to make her home with Bruce a few months after he qualified and took his seat in the House. Peter McAllister, Bruce's scientific brother, had left Chicago to complete his studies of chemistry in the universities of Europe.

Between one of the two brothers Elaine had to choose, for she was not of those born for seclusion, and since Europe was out of the question she naturally cast her lot with Bruce. Her personal relationship with him was closer, anyway. It was through Miss Madge Weber, an artist whose acquaintance she had made in her student days in Chicago, that she had been persuaded to take quarters in that dingy old building in which was located the studio of Rossiter Rembrandt Dickinson.

Elaine often passed the artist on the way up and down the stairs, and the fat and short man had a provoking way of standing in the door frame, thrusting his hands in his trouser pockets and staring at her, with mouth agape as she betook herself to her room. He must have done this in a mere spirit of mischief, for certainly there was nothing in Elaine's sedate appearance that invited a flirtation. Even before she

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was thirteen there was a suggestion of the little old maid about Elaine, and her face changed remarkably little as she waxed toward maturity. Her features were small, sharp and thin, her complexion pale to lily whiteness. She had strained her vision from drawing in a bad light, and as a result she already wore glasses, which added to her seriousness of mien; but her eyes shone straight and clear at you for all of that, having their share of the penetrating sharpness that belonged at times to Bruce.

At first sight Rossiter Rembrandt Dickinson—his father had been an unsuccessful dauber in oils before him, and he had given Rossiter his middle name as an inheritance and an encouragement in art—looked more like a butcher than an artist, but the more you looked at him the more he looked like what he was and the less like what he wasn't. His big, square forehead jutted out over his face like eaves, and his eyebrows stood out prominently like two long straight ridges, deep in the recesses of which his big gray eyes were set. His aspect struck one as fierce and glowering at first, but as one became used to it, the humorous point of view was suggested. Among a very few people he was known for his brilliant portraits, among many more he was famous for his laziness; but his indolence was a figment conjured up from his appearance, for as a matter of fact he toiled like a slave, and his portraits, most of which he detested as pot-boilers, were far indeed from resembling those of the supreme artist from whom he took his middle name, and whom he worshiped as his patron saint.

Rossiter Rembrandt Dickinson called his studio "The Cavern of Despair," to keep the inquisitive and idle out of it, as he explained. And yet the cavern was the favorite resort of the do-nothings and the good-for-nothings for whom Washington is the Mecca, and those who had come to the

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capital in quest of jobs and found none, those who had had jobs and lost them, those who had outgrown their political usefulness in the various departments, those who eked out a precarious living by peddling reminiscences of the old days to the Sunday editions of the Washington papers—one and all of them lounged in his studio by day, smoking his pipes, drinking his beer and borrowing his money, and they slept in his chairs and his lounges at night, in return for all of which they flattered his pictures outrageously, and in consideration for all of that he lent the reprobates more of his money and gave them more of his tobacco, glad to have their admiration but not caring a straw for their ignorant judgments. Calling his studio the Cavern of Despair to keep the idlers away was much like painting the sign, "I am out" on his doors and leaving them wide open.

Amid this jetsam and flotsam, these wrecks on life's fickle ocean, there were some men who had done great things in their day, who had organized departments and introduced changes, and installed inventions for which men higher up had seized all the credit and reaped the renown; there was "old" Glostereek, waxen as death from indulgence in opium, whose improvements in the railway postal service had left him but that one heavy, faded pepper-and-salt suit which he wore summer and winter; and there was—but let us return to our mutton.

"Oh, they have to go somewhere, you can't chase them out in the street like dogs; I'm an artist, I ain't a politician," was the way Rossiter met the expostulations of his more aristocratic friends anent the havoc these intruders wrought in his studio and his purse.

It was in the nature of a great surprise to Elaine when Dickinson called one night at their apartment in Iowa Circle, armed with a letter of introduction from a mutual friend in

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Paris. He grunted out something about having intended to visit her long ago, but being altogether too busy to do it, and he started right in, without provocation or preamble, to tell her she had selected the very worst place in all the world for the practice of her profession. No one thought of buying pictures or art work in Washington. New York was the place!

There was that in his oracular and superior manner which rasped Elaine, and she dropped her usual expression of quiet, listening intelligence and asked with all the sarcasm of which she was capable when nettled, if he wasn't hiding his light under a bushel by remaining in a capital where genius found so little appreciation. Her annoyance seemed to amuse the fat short artist; when animated, despite her old-maidish appearance, he thought her attractive. He grinned broadly, showing his tobacco-stained teeth. "I never could sell out and get money enough to leave," he explained. "I dropped in here some years ago by accident, and I've hung on out of inertia. I started with a dream that Washington was bound to become the mirror of our national life, the center of our American art, and I wanted to do my share toward helping the movement along. I dreamed then—" a light flashed in his dull sleepy eyes and he waved his short arm and lapsed into silence.

Bruce, who happened to be present in the parlor at the time, listened to the ruffled conversation and chuckled to himself. The fellow was evidently a rare bird, a character in short, in whom he would delight, promising every kind of amusement to one who kept one's eyes open for the humorous in a sickly and serious world. He told a story to smooth over the brewing difference between his sensitive sister and her odd caller.

Rossiter Rembrandt Dickinson listened with a scowl on

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his face, his ridge of brow projecting angrily. "One of those rascally politicians," he muttered to himself. "I know the type. He can't catch me with his cheap clap-trap. Not much!" He wriggled uncomfortably in his chair, and showed visibly enough that he did not feel at home. A few minutes thereafter he took his departure, leaving on Elaine a decidedly bad impression, which her brother refused to share. "Dickinson is an honest fellow," he said simply, "and I rather like him."

There was another shock of surprise in store for Elaine when, a morning or two after the night of that visit, Rossiter Rembrandt Dickinson walked into her studio, without going to the formality of announcing himself by a knock on the door. "I just popped in to see what you were doing and how you were getting along," he remarked.

Elaine was doing a lithe nymph, bending over a pool of clay to pluck a water lily from its depths; she was proud of both its grace and its beauty, and she hoped that these qualities would win the praises of her uninvited visitor. But he merely grinned, showing his long yellow teeth, stained with tobacco, and throwing out his long ridges of eyebrow.

"I hope you like it," she said finally, exasperated by his patronizing grin and the set, fierce expression that followed it.

"I hope I do," he remarked, waddling around her table to get another view. "How long have you been working at that sort of confectionery in clay?"

"It isn't meant to eat," she replied, her white cheeks reddening, the features of her quaint, old-maidish face sharpening, her eyes gleaming through her glasses. She was preparing to lose her temper.

"It's too bad," he grunted; "model the next one out of chocolate creams," and out he waddled, with his froglike

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movement, not waiting for a retort in kind, and indeed Elaine was too stunned to find one.

"Your friend Dickinson is just a brute and a boor," said Elaine to Madge Weber, who chanced to come just as the fat artist went out. Madge was but a wisp of a girl with miniature features, black eyes, and blue-black hair. "You would have to look twice to find her if her hair wasn't so black, and her eyes didn't shine and dance so and give her away," is what Rossiter Rembrandt Dickinson said of her, adding usually: "She ought to be out on a ranch getting a dash of red on her cheeks instead of smearing carmine on china roses."

"Oh," laughed Madge, when Elaine detailed the artist's conversation, "that's really mild for R. R. It's just his way. You mustn't take what he says so seriously. Nobody else does. He really doesn't mean anything by it, and he's the best-hearted fellow in all the world when you get to know him." She stood on tiptoe to twine a sympathetic arm around Elaine's waist.

"I haven't the least desire in the world to cultivate his acquaintance further," spoke up Elaine tartly.

Madge laughed; one expected that her loud peal would carry her diminutive body away, much as a toy torpedo disappears after the explosion. "Oh, Elaine, you begin by hating him, like the rest of us, and you will end like the rest of us by falling in love with him. I have been in love with him twice. It gives one a certain standing in art circles here to have fallen in love with R. R. It certifies that one has passed out of the amateur into the professional stage."

When Madge left her studio at noon to run over to the Tea Cup Inn for a hasty luncheon, she met Rossiter Rembrandt Dickinson emerging from his studio like a great, shaggy bear pushing out of its den.

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"You shocked our friend upstairs dreadfully this morning," said she. "You always talk to new arrivals, R. R., as if Minerva had appointed you to serve in place of the nine muses to say who should enter the temple of art, and who should not enter it."

"I could save the goddess many a headache and heart-ache if she had," frowned the self-appointed divinity, disappearing from Madge's side, where he had been shambling along in his clumsy way, and dropping into a saloon in Eighteenth Street for his noonday sandwich and his high-ball. Fifteen minutes was the time he gave himself in theory for this refectation, but he usually dawdled over it for an hour; for the German saloonkeeper had a trick spaniel that amused the artist immensely, and every other noon at least, Captain Jack Munger of the 6th Cavalry and Lieutenant Glenn Dobson of the Navy, came over from the Lemon building around the corner, and from the Navy building across the street to have a turn at billiards or pool. They were as odd a trio as a whimsical and tricksy fortune ever tied together with a cord of friendship. "I like them," R. R. said, "because they don't talk about art; they are men of the great world; they know what is going on outside of dingy studio walls, and when Rossiter Rembrandt Dickinson leaves his brushes and palette he wants to forget his worries and his cares." And the first word of greeting from Captain Jack or Lieutenant Glenn usually was: "Rose, old man, that was a great portrait you painted of Kinkaid; I'm no judge of art myself, but my friends are, and I'll back their opinions any day when it comes to pictures," and R. R.'s brows would jut forth fiercely in his endeavor to look modest. And then Captain Jack would add: "Yes sir; your portraits are masterpieces. I'm proud to know such a great artist. I don't pretend to know much about colors or perspectives and values and all

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that sort of rot ; but I can recognize a likeness when I see one. Well, let's have another highball and a game of pool. Here's to you, R. R. I'll give you five years—no, damn me, one—to be on top of the heap."

And so it went, week in, week out ; at five minutes after twelve on the day of which we speak, R. R. Dickinson was feeding bits of bread and cheese to Gartenlaube's spaniel, to earn which the bitch had to stand on her hind legs, bark, and perform all manner of tricks for the artist's amusement. Captain Jack Munger in fatigue dress walked over to R. R.'s table, and not three minutes afterwards Lieutenant Glenn Dodson made his appearance in civilian dress.

"What's the matter with you, Jack?" asked Glenn, fingering Munger's shoulder straps. "What does this mean?"

"The order went out yesterday," complained Jack, "to come to the office in fatigue dress. Since old General Ostrander was married it's his young wife that runs the department and not he. She likes the old cock in his uniform best, and she insists that he be dressed to kill—in more senses than one—and so the order is passed along to report for office duty in fatigues."

"It's picturesque," said R. R. "I like variety."

"It's un-American and uncomfortable," complained Jack.

Lieutenant Glenn Dodson threw back his head and roared. He was a tall, square-shouldered, deep-chested fellow, while Captain Jack was small, light of weight and lithe, with a surprisingly weak, feminine voice, his masculinity duly considered. "Ha!" snorted R. R., his face fierce, his clenched fist rattling down on the table, "I have a little suggestion for the quartermaster general or whoever his worship may be." He sketched hastily with his pencil a row of soldiers in a fantastic Zouave costume, a stout hook projecting

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from a square plate, sewed to the seat of each of those warrior's trousers. The Captain and the Lieutenant bent over his paper, wondering what odd freak had seized the man now.

"That's the most practical uniform that ever was," explained the artist enthusiastically; "each soldier can carry two days' rations and his other effects on that hook and not feel any inconvenience. No tents are needed. Why?" (sketching rapidly as he spoke) "because they hang themselves in a row, side by side, to the first fence with their hooks and so fall asleep. The hook is as useful in battle as on the march. You tie a strong rope" (making a third sketch) "to the hook, put the ends of the ropes in the hands of the commanding officer, and if his men advance too quickly he restrains them; if they are wounded he pulls them back. Now if you want an elegant satire, you draw your newly married, henpecked General Ostrander so—the hook in the same place—and you put that rope in his wife's hands (there she is!) to show how she has him in control."

R. R.'s sketches set the table in a roar. "I guess for the sake of my job I'll not send it in; but wouldn't I like to, though!" said Captain Jack, regaining his composure.

CHAPTER VII

THE DISTURBANCE

AT one o'clock of the same day when Georgia called for Inez to drive over to the studio of Rossiter Rembrandt Dickinson, the artist shambled back from the restaurant, put on his paint-besmeared jacket, and began to toil like mad over his huge canvas of "The Man of the Mills"—the fourth in a series of ten subjects that he had chosen to illustrate American life and labor. His liking went to huge canvases, brilliant colors and fierce action, and this particular picture was the joy of his heart, the glory of his eyes, and as he laid on the broad and generous colors of his able palette, discarding his brush for his knife at times, he talked to the central figures as if they had been children of his flesh and blood instead of his fancy. "Hi, you, liven up! Push that rod, that's what you've got muscles and a back for. We won't have any idlers in this mill!" and so he went on scolding and praising his laborers, drawn with the grace and firmness of a master hand, but praising less than he scolded, for our artist was seemingly a stern employer.

Little Miss Madge Weber burst into his studio and watched him in quiet for a while, listening without comment to his growls and his complaints, marveling in silence at his sure technic, his refined workmanship, at the speed with which the knowing brushes of this clumsy, awkward man moved. "Why, you can never get that immense thing out of the room, R. R.," she remarked laughingly.

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"Eh! what's that?" he asked, looking down at her from his ladder. "You get me a purchaser and I will get it out fast enough. I'll tear down the front of this building; I'll pull it through the roof."

"Why, that isn't the kind of thing people buy, R. R.! Why don't you paint a picture of Diana at the chase, or Orpheus at the harp—that's what takes?"

"Takes! takes! You can't serve the Almighty and the almighty dollar, woman! What do I care what takes! That's not my purpose on earth! Enough milksops have put Orpheus to twanging his harp—no wonder he flew to Hades for refuge. And Diana has been hunted enough; let her rest! I know what I'm about. Rossiter Rembrandt Dickinson wants to paint contemporary life; I don't steal my inspirations from Greece. I work like a slave for 'em here, and now. Takes! takes! why don't you take yourself upstairs? Why do you bother me to take—Hi! hi!" He interrupted himself with a yell, almost losing his balance on the ladder and dropping his brushes and palette as he waved his short arms.

Little Miss Weber shook her black head and with a laugh that wavered between mirth and fright, she ran upstairs to her vases and her roses. She never could stand R. R. for more than a few minutes at a time; his brusqueness and his violence frightened her timid, retiring nature; he was too much like his own canvases, overpowering, huge, domineering, and the gentle Madge preferred the more-subdued and less assertive character, who would in turn have a preference for dainty Dianas and melodious Orpheuses.

R. R. bent over laboriously to pick up his brushes and set his palette to rights, apparently spending enough energy on the task to pull out a Corinthian pillar from the Capitol. "Women," he maundered contemptuously, "women! They

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always throw me out of tune. I can't do anything when they are around. I hate 'em! I detest 'em! If I wasn't such a soft-hearted fool I'd order them out before they got in here." He climbed up on his ladder again breathing heavily, as if he were carrying a man of his own weight on his shoulders; still fulminating against the sex that the innocent Miss Weber had represented so unfortunately.

At three o'clock the knocker on his door—a treasure that the artist had unearthed in Georgetown—was given several smart raps. Absorbed in his work he did not hear. The rapping was repeated. "Come in," he bawled, "man, woman or child, Christian or politician, come in! I'm not a servant or a butler; I have something else to do besides opening and shutting doors. They want an artist to do all sorts of menial tasks in this blamed country; they don't show us sufficient respect." He ended his short essay on "Artists Opening Doors," and sprawling down from his ladder, looked out of the window and saw Georgia Ten Eyck dismount with Miss Hammersmith from Inez's victoria—Georgia had managed to dismiss her own turnout—while the footman, who had tried the knocker first, was now assisting them to alight.

"Who's that other beauty that my subject has caught in her net? Takes two horses, a carriage and two men to haul one woman around nowadays," he grumbled. "I forgot all about the golden girl's appointment. My God, how the time flies! How precious it is! There ought to be a law making it a crime to waste a minute. I always have to stop—I never knew it to fail—when I am most interested in my series. Well, a man has to live!"

The only change in the demeanor of the artist when those two representatives of fashion entered his studio was a more rigid projection of his eyebrows. He paid homage to great souls. He blurted out an incoherent phrase about being

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overworked—a standing cause of complaint with him—and he shuffled over to the dais to fix a chair in place for Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck.

Georgia drew back intuitively from R. R.'s savage countenance as he arranged a fold of her drapery, and she half wished that she had gone elsewhere to an artist more polished and a studio less musty, although her portrait would have had to pay for the increase in her personal comfort. Inez sat silently in a farther corner of the big room, thoroughly enjoying the new experience and odd surroundings. Rossiter Rembrandt bent over the oval canvas of the ivory and gold portrait of his sitter, applying his quick, telling stroke to it. "Bah!" he maundered to himself, "the daughter of one of these politicians! He's visited the sins of his trade on her! Maybe I can't see her diplomacy peeping 'through her skin. That face of hers can't hide it from me, not much! I suppose if I put her true self on canvas she wouldn't take the portrait. And she's masculine too. There's something mannish about her. I don't know just where, but it's there. She's too powerful, too strong-minded for a woman. I'll bet she likes to run things! She strikes me as beautiful at first every time she comes in here, and then her masculinity gets some subtle hold on me. That other beauty who came in here is the better woman of the two, colder but more feminine, and more honest and sincere. They're curious creatures, women, but they don't fool me."

Thus he went on for half an hour, painting and talking to himself, when another rap resounded on the door. "Come in! the tongue of my knocker must be feminine gender, it's always wagging," he shouted. Amid the laughter of Inez and Georgia evoked by R. R.'s peculiar invocation, Elaine McAllister stepped into the studio. Towering above her on the threshold the lank form of Bruce stood hesitatingly.

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He had called to take his sister for a walk and he had insisted, ridiculing her protests, on stopping to see the eccentric artist.

"Come right in, Mr. McAllister," called Inez encouragingly, witnessing his hesitation.

"Whose studio is this, anyway, hers or mine?" said to himself the disgruntled R. R. bowing to his visitors coldly, and then when Bruce brushed past him to extend his hand to Inez he added: "That's the way with these politicians; they have no more manners than buffaloes." He turned bluntly and rudely to stare at Inez and Bruce. The well-bred Georgia, from her coign of vantage on the dais, wrestled with a broad smile and seeking, in obedience to the law of habit, to hide it behind her handkerchief, she drew that article from her long purse in a half conscious sort of way. A letter, sealed in a small white envelope, fluttered to the floor, clinging fearfully to the side of the dais. A noisy movement of the artist's easel saved the truant document from detection.

"There's some kind of a love affair going on over there," grumbled the artist to himself, his observant glances including Bruce and Inez. "He's a politician—she'll get the worst of it."

Elaine, exchanging a few formal words with the women to whom she had just been introduced, drew bashfully to one side. She occupied herself with admiring a hand-carved Spanish writing desk that the artist had picked up in his student days abroad.

"Well, has your nymph fallen into the pond yet or is she still pulling at the lily?"

"She's better engaged—she's eating chocolate creams." She congratulated herself on the promptness of the retort—they usually came after the occasion for their use was long by.

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"Miss Hoity-Toity!" he muttered to himself; then he grinned. Sarcasm troubled his heart no more than paint stains did his fingers.

Art meanwhile absorbed the conversation of Bruce and Inez. Here, too, he had a cultivated point of view. Art in the new democracy was a subject at which he was aiming his shafts. She lured his arrows to aim at a mark that was of a less remote personal interest to her. "Did Mr. Ardmore keep his promise and give you the letter?" she asked.

"No, but he has given me his word of honor that I am to have it Tuesday in the committee room."

Georgia overhearing the question and its answer, under the impulse of the moment, turned her face fully around, gazed at Inez with an expression that belonged half to surprise, half to inquiry, then blushed and bent her gaze on the annoyed artist. Bruce and Inez tried in the quiet of their own minds to unriddle the meaning of the odd, intense glance that shot across Georgia's large face.

"It will come out all right," he said finally, lowering his voice unconsciously.

"I hope it may," she answered, her voice attuning its pitch to his.

The golden Georgia, straining her nerves to overhear without seeming to do so, wondered at the nature of the relationship that might exist between Bruce and Inez, wondered still more what sort of conspiracy those low tones betokened.

Again he chose art in a democracy for his theme, and he was launched in the midst of it when Georgia Ten Eyck left her throne—it struck Elaine that her movements were those of a queen abdicating—and she joined Inez and Bruce. Her comment on the lateness of the hour put an abrupt end to Bruce's reiterated arguments. It was on the way out to

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their carriage that Inez remarked to Georgia: "I think that Bruce McAllister has improved ever so much since first we met in Chicago."

"He must have needed it, Heaven knows," returned the golden Georgia, with an assumed indifference. "I never could make up my mind quite if he was a man or a jumping-jack."

Inez felt the warm blood heat her cheeks and into her soft underlip her sharp white teeth sank. She once had passed light remarks of a like nature about Bruce to Addison but she resented them bitterly coming from another.

The subtle Georgia, watching Inez narrowly, guessed even more than the heart of Inez would have revealed to herself. "I have your secret, my dear young lady," she thought, feeling as if her hands by clasping another guiding rein had added to her power.

Inside the studio, meanwhile, Elaine covertly had signaled to her brother that the time for their departure had come long ago, but he would pay no more attention to her signs and her hints than to the gruff replies to his questions that came from the inhospitable, disagreeable R. R., who refused absolutely to be drawn into a conversation. Bruce tried a story that he revamped to fit an artist instead of a carpenter, but Rossiter Rembrandt took the point of it with a stolidity creditable to a Chinaman, and he was proof against Bruce's repeated declaration that "The Man of the Mills" was just exactly the kind of picture he liked.

Elaine finally dragged Bruce off much to R. R.'s relief, who grunted something about calling again—an invitation that came rather from the bottom of his throat than the same place in his heart.

"Now I can work again," said R. R. with a sigh of relief banging the door of his studio shut. "No, I can't either;

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the light's gone. It's a shame! Politicians, society and artist women all in one afternoon! Singly they're enough to make a man want to tear his hair out by the roots, but together—what did I do to deserve this?"

He waddled off to the sink, hidden by a curtain, to clean his brushes and put his palette away for the day. He was removing a delicate bit of fabric from the chair on the dais when his foot brushed against the lower edge of it and swept Ardmore's much-sought epistle into the middle of the floor near the spot where Bruce and Inez had held their disquisition. The noise made by the disturbed paper attracted his attention, but he dismissed it as altogether unworthy of stooping to investigate.

A moment later when he was donning his hat and coat, he noticed the missive and picked it up. Its white envelope showed no superscription to his inquiring glances. "It was dropped by that Hammersmith woman" was his careless and quick conclusion. "I'll mail it to her. Just 'Washington' will do, I suppose," he soliloquized, addressing the envelope on the opened leaf of the Spanish writing desk.

A knock called him; he arose grumbling, blotting the envelope with a violent slap of his outspread hand. The charwoman sought admission to his cavern. He chatted with her for a while, and his rough and ready gallantry might have surprised his more fashionable patrons. Afterwards, forgetful of the letter and all his other studio cares, including his rent for it, he strolled out for his daily exercise.

He waddled past the War, State and Navy building, which he greeted with his usual remark: "An absurd old pile; looks as if it were put together by children out of their toy blocks. Romanesque is it? Nonsensesque I call it." He grinned at his own attempted witticism and stumbled along toward the White House, where he paused to admire the

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grounds and the front, as was his wont. "Wouldn't I like to live in there, though, with a room facing the Potomac for my studio? But, pshaw! What chance has an artist got against a lot of pot-bellied politicians! They've turned it into a Black House, that's what they've done!"

He went by the noble Ionic portico of the Treasury building, which it may please you to know is what his majesty R. R. "considered architecture," and then he drew his walk to a halt for a moment to watch the steady stream of clerks pouring out of the offices on their way homeward. "The dupes of politic's loaded dice" was his unfavorable comment on these. He waddled southward toward the river, his eyes fell on the Washington Monument and his soul was lost in reverence and admiration. "Hi! hi!" was his salutation. "The old boy is amethyst to-day, poking his nose way up in the clouds. The mountains can't beat you for sublimity! I doff my hat to you. I don't see how the American people were satisfied with anything as grandly simple and as beautifully plain as you."

He strolled on to the shore of the Potomac, then retraced his steps through the Mall and toward the Capitol. At five he limped wearily across Fifteenth Street to a long row of decrepit Southern houses in I Street, facing Franklin Square; in one of these he roomed with "Doc" Scollard, a clerk in the Treasury Department, and his family. After dinner Scollard and he played whist from eight to ten precisely; then he betook himself to his bare room (an etched portrait of Rembrandt Van Rijn was its sole adornment—valued by R. R. as the apple of his eye), lit his lamp and read, for heaven knows how many times, the correspondence in which the genius and the spirit of Balzac revealed themselves to Mme. Hanska. It was a sight to see him read, to watch him bring his fist down on some passage that excited his warmest approbation

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and hear him say in a low, reverent voice, "Hi, there was a hero for you!"

And so passed R. R.'s day and night; and so he spent day after day and night after night—a simple, honest, lonely life, true to his art as the muse herself could wish, whose innocent pleasures cost no man pain and no woman grief.

His lamp is out; peace and sweet dreams to thee, R. R.

CHAPTER VIII

R. R.'S DISDAIN FOR POLITICIANS INCREASES

WHEN Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck opened her heavily monogrammed purse in the presence of Shaw to draw from it the Ardmore letter and found that precious document missing, she questioned her senses. A second search, fortified though her feminine soul was by a touch of the masculine, brought her to the very verge of tears. She quarreled then with the deities whom she always had trusted as the beneficent guardians of her destiny. It is likely to be so with fair women, spoiled by an admiring world, prone to find fault with what lies beyond them rather than with themselves.

Sydney P. Shaw almost forgot himself and lost his temper. He would have thought naught of it had Georgia failed in her mission, but the fact that she had achieved what no man could have done and then thrown to carelessness the fruits of her labor, vexed him. But his usual policy came to the rescue and bade him be suave; his was the horrible gift of being angry when and with whom he chose.

"I am sure you will find it," he said in cheering tones, dear to the heart of woman. "Undoubtedly you will find it. You surely dropped it in that artist's studio and I am positive he will keep it against your coming. It's a pretty base sort of a fellow you know, anyway, that will trifle with a letter. The trouble is, my dear Georgia, that the impor-

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tance of the letter naturally makes you nervous and more fearful that it has been lost beyond recovery than the facts will warrant."

"I hope so," replied the golden Georgia, her large face lighting up. "I shall go to Mr. Dickinson's studio the first thing in the morning to inquire."

"Fortune will refuse you nothing. You will find it, never fear," he returned trying to silence his own worry by his own good cheer, as one might whistle to keep up one's courage. Torrentwise he poured out his praise for the cleverness she had displayed in capturing the brief.

She leaped responsive to his homage and as if beseeching more of it she said: "I believe, Sydney, there is something going on between Bruce McAllister and Inez Hammersmith."

"What makes you think so?"

She detailed what she had seen and heard in the studio.

Astonishment gave vent to an exclamatory "Hm!"

"I twitted her afterwards on McAllister's ungainliness, and although she said nothing I could see that she resented it deeply."

"I suspected something," he commented, unwilling to acknowledge that his superior masculine observation had been at fault; "but I had no idea the affair had advanced so far. I knew, of course, that McAllister was willing, but I thought the Hammersmith girl aimed higher."

Georgia expatiated at length on taste, adding nothing to the theory that the trite Latin apothegm does not cover.

"And you say that McAllister's artist sister has a studio on the floor above this fellow's?"

She affirmed her assertion; he looked as if he were more gravely concerned about the lost letter than he had been willing to confess. It was she who brought consolation this

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time. It would be the part of wisdom to spare their tears and not consider the missive lost until her visit to the artist failed to recover it.

In the morning she was in R. R. Dickinson's studio not so very long after he had opened it. He mumbled his astonishment at seeing her and growled forth something or other about being interrupted. She expressed a consuming interest in the portrait; he remained impassive, reflecting. Then she remarked in quite a matter-of-fact way:

"I happened to drop a letter yesterday—not one of any particular importance—and I wondered if I could have been careless enough to have let it fall here."

"Ah," he thought to himself, "that's what she wants! It wasn't in her nature to come out straight and direct. The daughter of a politician!" and aloud he said curtly: "Yes, I found a letter. I thought it belonged to Miss Hammersmith and I mailed it to her last night." His absent-mindedness saw the thing done that this very absent-mindedness had failed to do. "It must be there by this time." He fastened a longing eye on "The Man of the Mills" to show his interest was there and that the interview was over. She blushed for this crude fellow and bowed her way out. When she passed down the four stone steps that led to the sidewalk, she heard his studio door slam ominously and she laughed aloud, finding something humorous in his exaggerated rudeness.

"Supposing," she reflected, as she walked quickly and gracefully in Seventeenth Street toward Farragut Square, "that Inez has already received and read the letter—what then?" She found no answer to the question she put herself, and she resolved to let circumstances solve the difficulty.

She discussed with Inez, her arm twined around her waist, everything in Washington but the purpose that had

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brought her thither; finally she introduced it with a "by the way." To Inez, however, the letter that R. R. failed to mail had not come. Georgia, her heart fluttering, suggested that a mistake might have been made. A query among the servants, a close inspection of the mail-bag proved none. Georgia's conversation circled, moving away from the letter only to return to it again before she had finished. Inez, divining her method, wondered at her persistency and she decided that the missive was of importance.

"Artists," remarked Georgia finally when she was about to depart, "are notoriously careless. He may have misaddressed it. Supposing, if it happens to be on your way, that we stop at the post office to inquire?"

Inez, her curiosity on edge, consented readily. As a matter of course the post office was obliged to plead ignorance of the letter that never had left R. R.'s studio. Georgia, dismissing the subject as one of no consequence, left the aroused Inez to visit the artist again. His beclouded face and his brow, jutting angrily, showed his displeasure at the repeated interruption.

"I'm not the post office!" he growled when she had excused her reappearance, "nor am I responsible for their errors." She praised "The Man of the Mills," its colorfulness, its action, its realism before she went on to say:

"We are all liable to mistakes, won't you look again?"

"Thinks I don't see through her flattery," he said to himself; and aloud: "Look! Where in Heaven's name shall I look? I tell you that, as sure as my name is Rossiter Rembrandt Dickinson, I addressed the letter to Miss Hammer-smith on that Spanish writing desk, and then I walked around the corner and dropped it in the mail box." By some peculiar illusion of the memory and the senses he actually saw himself taking the various steps of the process.

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Georgia held her ground gently, trying to appease him by the logic that since to err egregiously was human he need consider it no sin in his particular case to have sent a trifle amiss. The answer he roared out frightened her.

"Don't you think that I know that, madam? It's no news to me! But I tell you I sent the letter, and I know what I'm talking about. Look here, see and satisfy yourself, since you won't take my word for it."

He flung the leaf of the writing desk down with a thump, disclosing its many-compartmented interior. An excited rummaging of its contents failed to discover the letter. Georgia departed, scattering behind her profuse apology at the disturbance, to which came his grinning rejoinder that he had told her it would be worse than futile. He heaved a sigh of relief, forgetting the letter quite as thoroughly as if he had never heard of it and he surrendered himself to "The Man of the Mills." Georgia returned home disconsolate.

At noon Shaw telephoned to her from the Capitol. Her guarded response alarmed him, but finding her so distraught he made light of her fears and tried to calm her. He reflected afterwards, seeking to find for his ruffled nerves the consolation they needed, women were poor manipulators and the probabilities were that she had not gone about her search in a practical manner. There was, he felt sure, a fair chance left that the letter was in the studio still. If that letter was in Bruce's pocket—and it might as well be there as anywhere else—McAllister carried with him the warrant for his enemy's political death. Sydney again paid his respects to the carelessness of women, and he consulted with his faithful man Ommaney, resolving to send him to the artist's studio since it might be hazardous to be seen there himself.

The crafty and resourceful Ommaney knocked at R. R.'s door at two o'clock. This last interruption made the artist

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fearful for the life of his inspiration, and the voice that bade Ommaney to enter was an indistinguishable growl. To the shaggy person, the beetling brows, the glowering eyes, the statesman introduced himself as Right Honorable Richard Ommaney, M. C., Chairman of the Committee of the Judiciary, etc., etc. R. R. was quite as overwhelmed as if he had said, "I'm Richard Ommaney, street-sweep for their triune majesties the Commissioners of the District of Columbia."

"Well, what do you want?" he asked fretfully, his eyes longingly traveling toward "The Man of the Mills." Then he glanced at Ommaney piercingly and felt still less inclined toward that gentleman's small, furtive face, his freckled countenance and sandy hair. "Another of these cheap politicians," he grumbled to himself.

"I have been recommended to you by my friends as one of the best portrait painters in Washington, and since I happened to pass by here to-day, I thought I would inquire about terms."

"I'm very busy just now," he said, his brow smoothing slightly, "and I can't give you a sitting for some time."

"Oh, I can wait," said the obliging Ommaney as he dropped down upon R. R.'s lounge.

"Very well," replied the artist, hoping the hint would dislodge his unwelcome visitor. "I'll let you know by letter."

"And the terms?" Ommaney stayed where he was.

R. R. had his price and mentioning it he turned his steps toward his ladder. Ommaney arose—R. R. hoped to go—but he remained to praise.

"That's a wonderful picture you have there," said Ommaney, standing off to admire it critically, "just the sort that appeals to me." He lapsed into a reflective quiet and then said in a sharp businesslike tone, "What do you want for it?"

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Dickinson grinned. Madge Weber's prophetic, "You'll never sell that, R. R.," flashed through his egoistic mind. The picture was not even done, the paint was not dry on the canvas and here was gold in advance of fame to recompense merit! There was such a thing as being too hasty in one's judgment of people, and while a man might sink to politics, still in the hidden resources of his soul he might nourish a love for art as lofty as anybody's. Waxing eloquent, he descanted on the merits of the canvas. Ommaney admired his enthusiasm, estimating its dynamic value in politics, and he turned a deaf ear to the laudatory criticisms that the artist passed on his own work.

"But the price?" asked Ommaney, as if its merits were so patent even to the layman that it remained only for the price to settle the bargain.

"A thousand dollars," said the jubilant R. R., but so hesitatingly that the least alert of men could have seen that he would have been willing to have split terms with his own rash exorbitance.

"I don't see any good reason why we shouldn't come to an agreement," said Ommaney. He lured R. R. on, talking about other artists and art in general, passing lightly and logically to ask if women were more difficult to paint and portray than men. Dickinson delivered himself to a sympathetic listener at length. The sympathetic one agreed with him and ran on from women in art to mere woman. He had observed in his time that the lighter-minded sex was apt to be more careless than man. There was something peculiar about that!

The artist nodded. He wondered at what his munificent visitor was driving, but he interposed no argument in defense of the carefulness of the fair sex. Much he cared, ran his own separate conclusion, whether they were

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careful as misers or careless as prodigals. Cautiously, indirectly, building around the hint whole walls of "ifs," "buts" and "fors," Ommaney threaded the maze and finally reached the end and aim of his verbose excursion, the letter.

The ridge on R. R.'s brow jutted ominously; a faint suspicion illumined him, throwing light over the real purpose of this visitor. He was naturally mistrustful of politicians, hating them with all his heart and all his soul, and the shadow of a doubt needed but to cross his mind before he filled in its baleful outlines with substance. Watchful, alert, controlling himself with no end of inward effort, he let the man talk on at length while he awaited his opportunity to swoop down on him and take his vengeance for time lost and hopes deferred.

Ommaney drew back from the subject merely that he might gain more purchase and clutch it the firmer when his conversational antennæ reached toward it again. He interrupted himself to say: "I should think it would be mighty attractive for a fellow of your artistic temperament to be in Venice. A consulship, I should think, if you tried for it, might not be very difficult to secure."

"Go to Venice!" bellowed the exasperated R. R., unwilling to endure the ordeal longer. "What do I want to do in Venice? There are enough things to paint here! Go to Venice? You politicians don't need to come here to bribe me! If I had that damn letter I'd say so! What the deuce can I do with it? I don't wish any more of my precious time wasted on that nonsense. My time is my own; I don't steal it from the people who pay me. You needn't visit here and trick me into believing that you want your portrait painted and that you intend to buy my picture and——"

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"My dear sir, I assure you—" In vain Ommaney tried to stop the raging torrent of abuse.

"Don't assure me! Please leave! This is a studio built for devotion to art, not for politics."

Ommaney bowed his head to let the storm blow over it. He feared to leave the vociferous artist in his present state of mind, knowing not what gossip and what ultimate result might be born of it. He drew nearer him to put a pacificatory hand on his shoulder. R. R. pulled it down in less time than Ommaney had lifted it up, and he roared out at the top of his lungs, his face matching the carmine of his palette as he opened the studio door:

"Go to the Capitol! That's the place the Government keeps for your like! I pay rent and I earn it honestly! Join your buccaneering comrades up at the Capitol, but you keep out of here."

Obedience seemed to Ommaney the only part left of valor and he deserted the field muttering under his breath dreadful imprecations against the artistic temperament and the crazy genius possessed by it. He sought out Shaw to acquaint him with the failure of his mission, and Shaw, despite the fact that his fix was desperate, laughed uproariously at Ommaney's adventure in the Cavern of Despair, and Ommaney, whose sense of humor was only submerged in anger, rescued that choice possession and joined in with him. Then they exposed to discussion all sides of the issue and prepared a plan of action that would keep abreast of all the predicaments that arose. To search for the letter longer, they agreed, was useless. Accident had taken it; accident alone could return.

During one of those same beautiful twenty-four hours Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck, in her overanxiety to find the letter, gave the enemy a clue to its loss and sent them posthaste

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in search of the treasure-trove. Circumstances dovetailed nicely with the untoward fortune of the last few days; the dinner to be given at her home that very night helped her to take the false step easily. Among the social luminaries of the first magnitude the guests numbered Count Villari, the Polish minister, his daughter Anna Villari, and Secretary and Mrs. Scarborough, and Secretary and Mrs. Kinkaid. We forbear mentioning those of a radiance too minor to emblazon their own names, and we conclude the list by saying that Edward Donovan Butler borrowed from rather than lent light to this mundane constellation. He felt himself more invited than included.

In Washington, where a social position depends more upon what you were before you came to the capital than what you did to get there or what you have done since your arrival, there must have been an unusual reason to explain the correspondent's presence in the home of the rigidly exclusive Fiskes other than may appear on the surface. Georgia maneuvered it. The press was a source of presidential booms and the correspondents made them before they were launched. She was quick to learn, her resourceful fingers searching for power in the Press gallery quite as thoroughly as they did in either of the two houses of Congress, that little Butler was a man to be reckoned with in the newspaper world of the great Middle West. With him for captain she hoped her cohorts might seize that section. She counted the East as her father's tributary and she feared that if the Middle West were lost, her arch would tumble for the lack of a keystone.

The chipper correspondent was not adverse to allowing the Speaker's daughter to take her place in the complicated mechanism he had built up for the gathering of news, and he accepted the invitation more curious than suspicious of the

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motive that lay behind it. In Washington everybody wants something from everybody else and eternal vigilance is the watchword of the successful and the ambitious.

It occurred to Georgia at the dinner table, as her clear eyes fastened on the correspondent's sloping face, that he in his full knowledge of current events and gossip might have possibly an inkling of the whereabouts of the lost letter. She knew that he was a close friend of Bruce's and she was not above the suspicion that the artist, influenced by the insidious force of propinquity, had entrusted that precious bit of paper to Elaine. Once in the hands of Elaine it would pass on of course to Bruce and there complete the vicious circle.

Later in the evening when Butler was attempting a conversation with the Polish minister's monocle—the one responsive feature of that gentleman's stony countenance—the subtle Georgia spirited him away to a Turkish corner in one of the smaller rooms that opened on the parlor. Pasha-like he was sunk in a sybaritic heap of pillows. Overhead, between the folds of the heavy rug, woven in interminable Persian scroll, the bejeweled lamps twinkled mellowly. The pronounced colors of the room blended with a lulling effect, all of its furnishings being too assertive to allow prominence to any one feature.

Small talk occupied them. Her silvery laughter paid a flattering respect to his pointed reflections. She was, with a sort of piscatorial deliberateness, allotting him due time to tire himself out before she gave her hook the incisive jerk that was to add him to her already heavy string. Her self-conceit, of which she had a degree rather than a share, paid her brilliancy all the homage it deserved.

The conversation zigzagged, slowly climbing higher toward a more serious level. When they had scaled its topmost peak she gave her own impressions, befittingly colored,

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of the last squabble in the rooms of the Interstate Commerce Committee and she asked for Butler's. He responded ambiguously. She abandoned the theme temporarily, merely to play it more insistently and louder later on. His indirection piqued her boldness and she asked, even though recognizing the danger of so doing, while she was fascinated by it:

"Have you heard anything more of the letter itself?"

"Why, I have no doubt that McAllister has it," he answered, rubbing his eyes to conceal the expression that wavered over them.

The sharp tone of anxiety that so suddenly betrayed itself in her voice, the excitement suppressed but sensible that had crept into it gradually, the reiterated beating out of the same motive on the kettle drums, aroused his suspicion and set his wits to work at a rate wearing to the machinery of the brain.

He intensified her eagerness by a subtle evasion of the subject, as if the reason for his avoiding it were that he knew more than he wished to tell and therefore stood in fear of what a slip might lead him to divulge. She directed the conversation toward art and found her modern instances of illustration in the work of R. R. Dickinson. An artist's work being a key to his character, she could not help but wonder whether Mr. Dickinson himself was as honest and sincere as his work.

As she flashed through studio door and window with a logical quickness past pursuit, the inner voice that cried in Butler's ears, "Holy High Jinks, she had her hands on the letter and mislaid it in that artist's room!" almost startled him into jumping to his feet. However, his was the part of an impassive Pasha, and lolling back luxuriously on the cushions he laid no violent hands on the verisimilitudes.

CHAPTER IX

THE INTERVENTION OF ELAINE

AT one o'clock that next morning Mr. Edward Donovan Butler stood on the stoop of Speaker Fiske's house and gazed down on the torches carried by the flying Mercuries, burning dimly and uncertainly now as the myriad stars in the Washington sky. He moved slowly down the brownstone stairs, entered the Circle and stood for a second irresolute before the low, long curving marble that made a background for the Hahnemann statue. Then he turned suddenly into Rhode Island Avenue. Now and then the click-clack of a horse's hoofs on the pavement broke the stillness in which the houses, huddled in the dense darkness, seemed to sleep.

Iowa Circle was his quest. On arriving there he was lost amid the high palms that turn the court of the Stanton apartment building into a tropical forest. Stumbling through the impenetrable thickness he picked out his perilous way, and a moment afterwards he had the delicious sensation of soaring skyward—a sensation that might have approached ecstasy if the elevator had been running to lift him, or if the stairs had been less difficult of ascent. The top floor circumscribed his pleasure; for here it was that his more prosaic labors of feeling his way along the dark winding hall began. A resolute pull at the somnolent bell—he prayed

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under his breath it might be the right one—brought to the door Bruce McAllister, arrayed in a costume compounded of articles half fit for the day and half fit for the night and altogether fit for neither. He peered through sleepy eyes at his nocturnal visitor.

“It’s I—Ed.”

“Spare your breath,” yawned the hero; “I knew it was you. Only the mad arouse the sane at this hour.”

He led the enemy of sleep into the library and lit the gas. Its yellow rays open for us, as it were, the heart of democracy—its lair, if you prefer. A long, pine table, protesting against being pressed into service for a desk, groaned under its weight, piled as for the ragman, of documents, reports, papers and those other necessities dear to the heart of Minerva and our overworked congressmen. Fat books, dull as their corpulent appearance implied, stretching out in every conceivable position but the proper one, occupied shelves that couldn’t have been more uneven had our hero been their constructor. So undecided was the color of the wall paper that we pause to consider whether or not the room was papered at all. Of the floor we speak with certainty—it was bare. When Bruce, lost in thought, was out of it, the room itself was empty of ornament.

“Well, what’s up?” asked our hero, the eagerness of his swarthy face belying the indifferent tone of his voice.

“Oh, nothing,” replied Butler sarcastically, seeking stimulus in a fresh cigar (democracy, misled by middle-class example, sought refuge in a plebeian pipe); “I just came around at half past one in the morning for the fun of waking you up. I wanted to do it so much that I have been sitting up waiting for the hour to arrive. What the deuce do you suppose is up on the morning when your committee is to meet and Bruce McAllister’s fate is to be decided? I sup-

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pose you think the President is going to get out of his bed to save your political life."

"You're up, anyway, to watch the execution, and that's some consolation," grinned Bruce.

"Oh, yes; I suppose as usual you see me and think everything is all right. Lean on me, that's proper, like a child on its father. I don't doubt at all that you have the letter."

"No, but I presume you came here at one in the morning to tell me you have. Otherwise you wouldn't have the heart to awaken me. I knew the thing would turn up in some shape."

"Faith is a beautiful thing; but if I had any faith in that letter it would be torn into about fifty sections by this time. And I want to tell you that if you don't put your big hands on it between now and the time the committee meets. I would advise you to skip Washington and leave word to have your trunk follow. They're going to turn you into a national joke; the fellows that write humorous paragraphs for the newspapers will be able to sleep an hour longer in the morning on account of the easy copy you are going to give them."

"If I make a nation's jokes, Ed, I don't care who makes its——"

"It's a fine time to wax humorous!"

"Don't get excited, Ed; Ardmore——"

"Who's excited?"

"Ardmore promised me, I say, on his word of honor that he would give me the letter in the committee room this morning."

"Ardmore promised! If Ardmore saw the truth coming his way he'd turn tail and holler murder! He hasn't got the letter himself."

"How do you know?"

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"I never heard of a witness being haled into court to answer questions at one-thirty in the morning."

"You have the letter, Ed?" There was hope in his voice. His swarthy face lit up and he twined his long legs around the chubby legs of the cane-bottomed chair on which he sat.

"If I had it I should be working the telegraph wires to Chicago, not sitting here. I haven't got it!"

"What brings you here, then?"

"Just to warn you to prepare for your approaching fate."

Bruce breathed easier, believing somehow that warning had put his doom to flight. Butler puffed at his cigar for a second or two in scowling silence and then he added: "I also came to tell you that Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck had that letter and lost it."

Bruce unhooked his long legs and sat bolt upright. The gray faded out of his eyes leaving them in full possession of the dreamy blue, and through his mind there rolled the golden Georgia's caressing voice heard but a few nights ago: "You will surely keep your promise and call on Monday, Mr. Ardmore!" Undoubtedly Ardmore had kept his word for once, making the dangerous exception that proved the undesirable rule.

"What's the matter with you, Bruce?"

"Nothing," he answered, swinging a long leg over his left knee.

"Well, you look like a Chinaman on the moment of discovering gunpowder." Unwilling that his thrilling feat in the most rarefied atmospheres of intellectuality should go unapplauded, little Butler in a way described it, telling how he had leaped to the startling conclusion that Georgia Ten Eyck had had the letter and lost it. Looking smilingly at

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the bedazzled Bruce, who sat there with mouth agape, he drew his performance to a close by a wild flight through the realms of space that ended with the deduction that Georgia had dropped the letter in the studio of Rossiter Rembrandt Dickinson.

But the seemingly bedazzled Bruce was lost in the mazes of his own dreamy thoughts rather than admiration of the correspondent's intellectual audacity and brilliancy. He recalled now the full avid glances, as of a wild thing startled, that Georgia had shot at him and Inez in the studio but a few days since when the letter claimed a few words of their conversation.

"Strange," murmured Bruce.

"What's strange?"

"That she maneuvered to get that letter from Ardmore in the first place and that she is so anxious to get it back in the second place. There have been rumors, have there not, about Shaw and Mrs. Ten Eyck?"

"I told you the other night, Bruce, that I had heard no more than the echo of them. The story broke before my time."

With this thought for his Ariadne-thread Bruce wandered again into the intricate maze of reflection. Butler called an end to his excursion with: "There's not a second to be lost in futile dreaming. Elaine knows this Dickinson?"

Bruce nodded affirmatively.

"Your committee meets at ten-thirty and I'll meet you in Elaine's studio at a few minutes after ten to learn what she has discovered. We can go from the studio to the Capitol together. Meanwhile, having a hard day's work ahead of me before night comes, I don't think it would be a bad idea for me to get a little rest."

Bruce remained awake. He was a light sleeper at the

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best and had an owl-like fondness for the darkness since it seemed to serve him as a sort of a background to throw his thoughts into sharper relief. He awoke the wondering Elaine a full hour before her time and he awaited her coming restlessly at the breakfast table.

The dining room, lightened by Elaine's artistic touch, was less severely democratic than Bruce's den. On the border, between the ceiling and the wall, she had painted running garlands of petunias, and softened the straight formal lines of the gray wall paper with a woodland water-color or two. Her knowing eye, trained by poverty to recognize bargains, had picked out the rug, which was more cheerful in tone than fine in workmanship—possibly it may be straining a point to say that Bruce would not have noticed its disappearance from the floor. A piece of silver or two, bespeaking the family's faithfulness to tradition at the expense of hunger maybe, decorated the oak-stained sideboard. A canary bird sang in its cage, unheard by the abstracted Bruce, and several rows of real geraniums and begonias competed with Elaine's painted flowers. Let an impartial public award the prize!

When Elaine appeared her brother put forth all his powers to involve her in the mysteries of politics. She stood aloof, uninspired and uninterested by intrigue or cabal. Indifference only made its slow exit when Bruce finally confessed that in the lost letter his future and his cause were involved. But when he made the too sudden announcement of the part he wished her to play in recovering that prodigiously important document, indifference came stealing back on the stage again. Her pointed nose lifted itself chidingly and her sharp eyes glanced at him scornfully through her glasses. Ask a favor of that rude, ill-mannered man who treated her with either contempt or superciliousness! She

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would rather die than do it! Even to speak of it angered her!

In the old allegories *Sisterly Affection*, we believe, suffering a rout or two from the armies of *Pride*, *Humiliation*, and their like, was always victorious at the crucial moment; and even in our own day and generation, with an infrequency that keeps it hallowed and aloof from the commonplace, the same miracle comes to pass, and teaches life to preach by example against our own growing cynicism. Let those still skeptical ones ponder on how Elaine McAllister surrendered pride for love and knocked at R. R.'s door; nor does the timidity of Elaine's knock, disturbing the artist's morning labors, by any means indicate the amount of courage and resolution it took thus to announce her presence. The very thought of it humiliated her.

Circumstances altered cases, Bruce argued. He led her on gently and then he laughed her fears down. She merely mistook the artist's eccentricity for rudeness. He had always said that she was a little hard on him. He liked R. R. first-rate himself. He was a character, and characters all had a streak of the eccentric in them. She consented finally. The hardest part of that day's work for her began with the timid knock at the artist's door.

"Come in!" he bawled, and then descrying his visitor, a broad grin usurped the place of the frown that wrinkled its way across his jutting brows. "Oh, it's you, is it? I thought you would want my help before very long."

"I don't want your help."

"Very well, then, what can I do for you?"

She stammered and turned red and he, taking a cruel delight in her embarrassment, grumbled: "I'm very busy; I hope you'll hurry."

She gasped; her inclination, if not her feet, rushed for

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the door; but she stood her ground resolutely, her courage growing with what assailed it, and she remarked, "I don't want your help for myself."

"You came for another, then, philanthropic soul." He laid long and sarcastic stress on each syllable.

The door tempted her again and, fearful of ignominious flight before she even broached her mission, she blurted out:

"I was told that—well, on Monday afternoon—yes, it was on Monday—on Monday afternoon you found a letter here written by——"

"What, that confounded, unmentionable letter again!" He was on his feet flapping his extended arms roosterwise. His pretended anger changed suddenly into a rage that swept away even his own pretext before it. "I said three times that I mailed that accursed letter. I haven't got it! What do I want with it? Go home and tell your brother that I haven't got it. I mailed it. Mailed it! Woman, mailed it! I told Mrs. Ten Eyck that I didn't have it and she had to trot back again to question my word. And yesterday afternoon a man by the name of Ommaney, one of those cheap politicians, came in here and tried to bribe me into saying I had the letter. He offered me a thousand dollars for 'The Man of the Mills,' and that not bringing the horrible letter, he offered me a consulship in Venice. I haven't got the letter, I say! Once and for all I haven't got it! And if I had it I'd tear it into shreds! I don't want to hear another word about it, I——"

Elaine fled, frightened, as by a threat of physical violence, by the artist's mad aspect and his terrible whirlwind of words. "That's the way it is with these women," he grumbled; "you can't lift your voice above a whisper but they take offense. They bring 'em up in hothouses nowadays. They'll preserve them in incubators next. I didn't want to hurt

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her though—I'm sorry about it. I'll apologize when I see her again. But it was her own fault anyway; hers or that rascally politician of a brother."

Bruce and Butler found her just after her unpremeditated flight still inwardly aquiver—though she said next to nothing about it—from the indignity she had suffered. A few minutes later, when they had left for the Capitol, Butler's sloping face was black and despondent, but the swarthy Bruce was light of face as of heart, and, bursting into eccentric and unaccountable fits of laughter, he predicted that all would end well.

"I suppose," said Butler angrily, when denied any solid reason whereon the prophecy was based, "that you've had another attack of your superstitions again. Saw the sun over your right shoulder or dreamed about a flock of sparrows in flight."

Since his citadel of prescience was pinnacled with the three pins he had picked up outside of Elaine's studio door, Bruce believed it an unassailable sanctuary for good luck, and he merely grinned in reply.

CHAPTER X

THE PEA AND THE COCOANUT

BUT I didn't lose it. I say this for the hundredth time; the letter never passed through my fingers. I never set my eyes on it," insisted Shaw.

"I know," said Anthony; "but your agent lost it."

"The same agent that was capable and astute enough to lay hold of it," retorted Sydney testily.

"He ought never to have lost it."

"No," returned Sydney, his lips turning white along the edges; "and it ought never to have been written—that's the truth of the matter." The words, in his petulance, slipped from him unawares and he regretted them. Sydney had been under a progressively higher tension all the week, and he looked pale and worn, and his temper did what it listed with his worn nerves.

Sir Anthony sucked in his underlip; he was not used to criticism and he chafed under it. Still he could not help but recognize the justice of the reprimand—had he not upbraided himself severely every day since that man McAllister had raised the fracas over the letter?—and he was obliged to apologize for his own conduct instead of devoting his attention to criticising Sydney's. He went into a voluble explanation of his motives in penning the epistle.

Sydney's thoughts whirled elsewhere; time was too precious to waste it by listening to Anthony's explanation of

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his false step. The harm had already been done for one thing, and Sir Anthony's excuses halted as much from lameness and fatigue as on account of their weak logic. Sydney eyed the ormolu clock on the mantel nervously. In a half hour the committee that would reshape his destiny was to meet; only a few over thirty minutes could lift supplicating and obedient hands to help him. How make the best use of their assistance before they disappeared forever? He mopped his brows, pacing the floor quickly and turning with a short nervous halt.

"The last moment—and saved!" he shouted suddenly, wheeling around and hammering his fist into the open palm of his left hand. "I've got it!"

"Got what?" asked Anthony.

Sydney, as if to make his inspiration more substantial and less elusive, clothed it in words. Sir Anthony must have found its appearance good, for he laughed heartily, looked relieved, and extended his congratulations to the resourceful Sydney. "You're shrewd, Shaw; you're shrewd; if you had devoted yourself to commerce you would have made even a richer man than I. I would rather make it a university than a hospital though, if you don't mind. I've given two hospitals away and I would like to diversify my philanthropies."

"A university or a hospital, it's all one," said Sydney, plucking nervously at his blond beard, his oblique eyes on the ormolu clock; "anything to make McAllister ridiculous."

Sir Anthony rubbed his hands, his cross eyes twinkled gleefully and he burst out into a short cluck of a laugh. "I don't see, though," he said, "how you are going to connect the thing with child labor."

"Don't you?" Shaw started to explain, but noticing the

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time he checked himself and remarked instead: "Time is rushing; you write and I'll dictate."

Sir Anthony sat him down at the writing desk and converted Sydney's words, almost as fast as they fell from his lips, into his precise handwriting. When he had done Shaw read over the paper carefully, laughed out his complete satisfaction, and thrust the missive into his coat pocket.

"Let me know at once how it turns out?" requested Anthony.

"You'll hear before I can tell you. McAllister will be the laughing-stock of America."

They shook congratulatory hands and Sydney, looking as if a year were falling from his shoulders with every step, hastened toward the Capitol, while Sir Anthony left the hotel to attend to the myriad affairs that had summoned him to Washington.

At the present time Anthony was revolving in his mind the possibilities of a scheme whereby all the trusts might be emerged into one colossal trust of trusts. He had been dubbed the father of the trust long ago; he longed now to be known as the mother of the progeny as well. Already he had reduced Cræsus to comparative poverty; he would soon force his present self to appear as a wretched beggar on the highways, mendicatory hat in hand, beside his future self. When one descends to comparisons, one may rob history of its legendary dignity.

Anthony Wyckoff's fortune had been estimated at five hundred millions, which would have contented most of us; but it is well to remember that there was a time when a millionaire was considered a Cræsus, and who knows but that at the rate with which the world moves a half billion may be considered but a modest competence? Let us not be overhasty in expressing a limit to our desires lest we chance

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to find ourselves with a paltry billion among a host of trillionaires.

Well, at any rate, Anthony Wyckoff's trust of trusts—known hereinafter as the Universal Trust—was to include the railroad systems of America, foreign and domestic steamship companies, his own Cosmopolitan Oil Company, the iron and steel industries, the coal business, the textile industries, the national banks, the telegraph and cable lines, the telephones, the municipal gas and street-railway companies, the gold, the silver and copper mines, flour, sugar, salt and tobacco and electrical supplies. It is possible that one or two minor industries may have been omitted in this little list, but suffice it to say that what Anthony left out was not at all worth taking in. Industrially speaking, the world was to be his and the limited group of lieutenants that were to serve under him.

Scientists tell us that if a pea be placed at the side of a cocoanut, the relative size of the sun and the earth will find their just proportions represented, and if one takes our United States Government, the money it controls and expends, the number of people it employs, and place it beside Sir Anthony's Universal Trust, the same pea and the same cocoanut will do to show how the one shrinks in importance beside the other. Anthony, then, would be richer and more powerful than the Government; he would have a larger majority of its voters on his pay roll, and he intended to have the Government run to suit himself. The milk in the cocoanut, to say the same thing differently, was in no way designed for the fattening of the despicable little pea; but, on the other hand, to extend the figure of speech a little further, the cocoanut had certain little designs whereby the pea was to serve its ends. The sun, huge as it is, and the earth, small as it is, are of mutual benefit in our vast solar system,

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and both help to keep the whole in motion. Surely, if the cocoanut is kind enough to keep its place and distance, and does not roll over and crush the pea out of existence, the latter ought to show its thankfulness by sundry little deeds of kindness. The right kind of tariff, taxation and laws, were all the pea was asked to give for the privilege of existing. But why poke fun at Anthony? Why belabor and scold him? Was it his fault, was he to blame, if we prostrated ourselves and gave him stilts to stride over us like a Colossus?

His morning's calling list included a number of senators, the President, several members of the Cabinet, the Speaker of the House, and one or two congressmen. We are half tempted to give the high-sounding names of those who made up the truly Homeric roll, but we crush it lest the invidious distinction seem an effort to pluck the sting from democracy and to deny victory to liberty. And, wherefore, should we seem in this hard battle of class interests to magnify the insuperable difficulties that lie in wait for the people of Bruce?

CHAPTER XI

THE HERO AS A FOOL

IN the committee room Bruce stood in the corner made by the projection of the old-fashioned mantel, his arm leaning against its yellowed marbled edge. A fire sputtered in the grate below, barely burning, as if, like the members there assembled, it were saving its energies for the dramatic moment. The minute hand of Bruce's watch summed up the situation poignantly and succinctly; if Ardmore crossed not the door within five minutes it was all up with our hero. He assumed the virtue, which he had not, of being unconcerned. The members of the committee, who were chatting together and scribbling at the table, glancing surreptitiously at Bruce every now and then, would have sworn that the letter was in his pocket. MacMillan, of California, bet Sands, of Ohio, ten dollars to five that Bruce would make good. The odds expressed the attitude of the room.

There was a step in the corridor that set Bruce's heart to sounding louder than it did the marble floor outside. Ardmore entered and catching Bruce's confident glance as the door swung open, that gentleman from Virginia dropped his eyes to the floor, dashing with him there the hopes of the gentleman from Illinois. Recognizing the utter futility of questioning the uncertain one, Bruce, with a calm, smiling face, put himself in the hands of inexorable destiny, insisting

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that his wavering doubts put their faith in the three pins. Shaw made a telling entrance a second later on a stage already occupied by the chief characters of the drama. He smiled and bowed from right to left, forgetting not to include in his obeisance his archenemy, which was to be expected from one as magnanimous and chivalrous as Sydney. Bruce thought, without being sure of it, that a reassuring signal passed between Sydney and his henchman Ommaney, on the lookout.

Shaw called the meeting to order. Some eighteen anxious gentlemen dragged themselves through the regular order of business and its attendant dry-as-dust routine, as an audience endures the dullest of plays in the hope that the dénouement may reward their patience by putting boredom, their common enemy, to flight.

The room drew a deep breath. At last the chairman gave a signal that the real action had begun.

"At the last meeting of this committee the gentleman from Illinois charged undue influence was being brought to bear on certain members of this committee in order that the McAllister Anti-Child Labor bill might not be reported out.

"Specifically, the gentleman from Illinois stated the gentleman from Virginia had received a letter from Anthony Wyckoff commanding him to do his utmost to prevent the said bill from leaving this room. The chairman believes he quotes the gentleman from Illinois correctly."

"Quite so."

The room, fearful of recantation and consequent disappointment, signified its relief. The sudden peal of the cannon coal in the grate made the committee start back with a shock; evidently its nervous organism had been wound to the highest pitch of expectancy.

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In his turn, the white-haired, white-bearded Ardmore, the redness of his face vivid by contrast, arose to testify. He acknowledged that he received a letter from Anthony Wyckoff, and freely admitted he read its contents to the gentleman from Illinois.

Our hero, swinging his leg along the floor, held his face Spartanly impassive, forbidding victory to fly its insignia there. He was conscious only of the removal of weights, of a lighter heart, of blood circulating without strain or effort. Well for him who has his faith, even though it rest on insubstantial pins!

"Has the gentleman from Virginia that letter now in his possession?"

Ardmore, artistic soul, carried on the dialogue in pantomime, opening his pocket with a grave and speaking hand, waving that bit of stage property with dramatic ostentation. Bruce took himself to task for his ignorance of physiognomy, wondering how, forgetful of the omens sent by favorable gods, he could have jumped to the erroneous conclusion that when Ardmore entered the room the letter came not with him. Honesty, he thought, was put to humiliation by the low average given to it in this world by Shakespeare. If the misanthropic learned of Ardmore and his noble resistance to the influence brought to bear upon him, they would be made whole. Truth had moved it battalions on the side of righteousness, and our hero, blithe of spirit, sank back in his chair and believed that his cause was won.

"Will the gentleman from Virginia read the communication he has received from Mr. Anthony Wyckoff to the members of this committee?"

"Certainly;" and then the smooth voice of honesty purred to a world of skeptics the epistle Sydney P. Shaw dictated to Anthony Wyckoff.

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“MY DEAR MR. ARDMORE:

“Ever since my return from Washington I have been meaning to write you, but the pressure of business prevented. I wish to say now, first of all, since the opportunity presents itself, that I was deeply impressed by your visits to me in behalf of the McAllister Anti-Child Labor bill. It is the duty of all good American citizens, among whom I hope I may honestly account myself one, to do all they can to save our little children from the hardships that even manhood should be spared. Count on me to do in behalf of the bill whatever falls to my small and modest amount of influence.

“It seems to me that the people of our glorious country ought to be educated to a point where they will have a keener sense of their responsibilities and duties. If the multitudes only knew, for instance, what the child meant to the State, I have faith enough left in my fellow-man to believe that no second appeal would have to be made to him to blot out the curse of child labor.

“The more I think it over, the more it forces itself home to me that there ought to be founded at Washington a national university for the gathering and dissemination of knowledge of this and an allied character among our people. If such a university, I hold, were to speak on the question of child labor, having the carefully collated facts at hand, it would command the attention and respect of all our citizens.

“What better purpose can wealth serve than to assist so worthy a project? And where is there a place more favorable for the founding of a university of this character than in our magnificent capital, where the finest of libraries and the best equipped of scientific departments will lend their valuable service to the earnest student?

“I have had the idea in mind for many years of endowing such an institution, and it seems to me that there could be no

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better time so to do than the present, which is making such hard demands on our scholars to solve its problems. While, for reasons of convenience, I should rather not have it known for some months to come, I pledge myself now to subscribe ten millions in Cosmopolitan Oil Company bonds toward an endowment fund to establish a national university along lines of original research and study. I can only be grateful to the Father of us all that He has permitted me to amass the means of assisting my fellows in a project that will in time inevitably assuage the sufferings of humanity. While I wish to impose no restrictions to my gift at all, it seems to me now that the money ought to be used chiefly in assisting our poorly paid professional and scientific men in the prosecution of their studies along the lines of their specialties; but, of course, this may be considered in the light of a detail which can be decided, like many other questions, later on. Assuring you of my profound regards, and hoping that your laudable efforts in behalf of the McAllister bill may bear the desired fruit, I beg to remain,

“Your faithful servant,

“ANTHONY WYCKOFF.”

Several members of the committee, for some inexplicable reason, found humor in the idea of a national university, and they laughed aloud until their peals echoed to the high, frescoed ceiling. The rest of the committee looked on with grave faces. Sydney, lifting aloft a dignified gavel, silenced these boisterous ones and absolute quiet reigned.

“Has the gentleman from Illinois anything to say?”

The gentleman from Illinois, holding a parley with his ears and questioning their veracity, answered after a pause, “Nothing.” Then, after a minute scrutiny of the epistle, noting that it was written on different stationery and on a

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date a week later than the genuine letter Ardmore had read to him, he said:

"I am very glad to learn that the gentleman from Virginia is so much interested in matters educational. It comes as a complete surprise to me, for while I was well acquainted with the gentleman's versatility, I never knew his tastes were so catholic. I suppose this merely goes to show that we may know our friends ever so well and yet not know at all the precious secrets they carry locked up in their bosoms."

"The remarks of the gentleman from Illinois are irrelevant; he is out of order."

Bruce said not a word further; for wherein lay the use? He was in their trap, and he would merely wear himself out if he attempted to evade the snares now. A few minutes later the committee adjourned at the signal from Sydney's gavel, swung triumphantly as the scepter of the gods whom foolish mortals assail at their peril. The sandy-haired, freckle-faced Ommaney looked at him, as the shrewd Mercury might have glanced at Jove, knowingly and slyly.

Bruce, seeking Butler in the Press gallery of the House, passed hurriedly through the corridors, his face set somberly, his ears anticipating the laughter of all America. He quailed before the awful rumble. Terrible is the fate of the rising star, signaled from afar with all honors, that must disappear behind the impenetrable fogs of ridicule, worst of all elements that throw reputation into eclipse and obscurity.

He hastened on, absorbed in himself and the pangs of his overthrow, past portrait and bust of the forgotten great, who in their little day might have risen victorious over a like defeat only to have a commonplace effigy raise an unheard whisper against the pall of oblivion at last. Consider the busts in Statuary Hall of the Capitol, and lay to fame the preacher's flattering unction! Lo! even the poor Indian,

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at whose stern and storied lineaments Bruce glanced as he passed on his way up the west stairway of the House, dropped back to the remote era from which the artist had tried to rescue him the moment our hero met Ardmore face to face on the landing. In stiffness of posture, in deadness of complexion, the Virginian might have vied with those whose marmoreal effigies were honored with a niche in the Valhalla just mentioned. He stood at gaze, startled and harried by the lack of opportunity there was of running for cover.

Bruce took hasty counsel with his judgment. Should he give the uncertain, characterless wretch the cut direct, looking on him as one unworthy of recognition even by democracy's prime exponent, or should he pass him the lie? His cutting of the knot proved the lesson in worldliness that Washington had taught him.

"Ardmore," he asked, his long lips opening humorously, "what made you do that to me?"

Ardmore's fretful eye, evading Bruce, ran toward the snow-capped heights of "Westward Ho!"—but the big picture was as blurred to him as his own thoughts. Finally, glancing down on the floor, he drawled out his answer.

"Do what? Oh, yes, you mean the letter! Well, while I value your friendship highly, McAllister, high as any man's in Washington, and while I am thankful that the plain people of this country have sent a man to Congress as worthy of representing their cause as you are, still I wouldn't permit myself—I couldn't have it on my conscience—to stand in the way of a university that is going to do so much for the poor talented youth of the land. Who knows, McAllister, but that when my boy grows up I may wish him to go there and secure its benefits. A magnificent project, McAllister; a magnificent project."

Bruce continued his journey.

CHAPTER XII

ONLY THE PRESIDENT

BRUCE had an appointment with the President at eleven o'clock and, since he was a full half hour ahead of time, he sat himself on one of the benches in Lafayette Square to squander it. What better place is there for the spendthrift of time to lavish a purseful of that precious gold? Pleasant it was for Bruce to find himself far from the rumble of the noisy House, the crowded lobbies, the squabbles of the committee rooms, from job- and favor-hunting constituents. The fern-leaf beeches wore a new coat of green, the tulips were flaunting bold heads above the ground, the hyacinths were out in vivid glory, the golden bells swayed their yellow chimes to the winds, and the pink and white magnolia buds were unfolding to the warm air. Each of the city's many squares and circles, into which the streets ran as spokes into a hub, was aglow with color—so many wheels of a stately equipage bedecked for the festival of flowers. Spring had come in all its glory!

"How good it seems to be here!" Bruce said to himself, throwing his arms wide out, breathing in with full chest the fragrant air. Nature, to his singularly unæsthetic tastes, made no appeal, but he had none the less a certain inconsistent fondness for many of her choicest gifts, as one may be negatively responsive to one's godmother, but keenly partial to her birthday remembrances.

"Talking to yourself? A bad habit, McAllister. It may

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prove that unpopularity has reduced you to your own company."

The ironical fanfare, announcing the great Fiske, fretted Bruce's ear before he looked up to meet the equivocal smile of the ironical potentate himself. "I am fond of talking to myself," he rejoined laughingly by way of defense, "and then I'm sure of just the audience I want."

"I dare say. Stupid but select. All selectness has that virtue, McAllister. I've practically given up a search for intelligence among the respectabilities." Delivering himself thus, as if the temptation to which Bruce had exposed him were greater than he could resist, Fiske sat down beside Bruce on the park bench, his neatly gloved hand toying with the light bamboo cane that he carried invariably. "His tongue," says our gossip, "was so sharp that it was needless for him to carry a stick for other than purposes of play."

"I am very fond of this spot. I never miss walking through it when I can," went on Fiske. He removed his hat and mopped his broad brow with his handkerchief. How much older, more haggard and worn Bruce looked beside him! What a poor figure his coarse-featured, swarthy face and rail-like form cut when forced into comparison with the huge but finely proportioned Fiske, dressed as if in conformity with the rules of Polonius, handsome but none the less strong of countenance. Bruce's sensitiveness was painfully alive to the difference.

"A grand morning nature has given us," continued Fiske, who had laid his usual reticence aside as a monarch his formal robes of state; "and she doesn't want any office for it, either. Lord, Lord, what weather we should have if the office seekers had control over it! Summer will be here, McAllister, before we know it; the national convention is right at our heels."

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While usually the subject that lay nearest Fiske's heart was no more on the tip of his tongue than that perfectly possessed and well-controlled organ would shock its owner by appearing on his sleeve, still he had no discomforting hesitancy about opening his mind to the trusty McAllister. A smile played around Bruce's long mouth as he thought of Fiske's valid claims to the presidency from a country that vaunts so lustily of its democracy around election time! Unlike Fiske he let his ironical thought pass unphrased. The silent man often has the advantage of looking on the world as from a curtained window, seeing everything that goes on around him while he himself may be but dimly desried.

Shaw's presidential star was in the ascendancy just now, and the mysterious laws of politics were weaving a nebulous veil around the competitors anxious to display their brilliant light from the same exalted position. Fiske, not philosopher enough to see that justice has no more to do with astronomical than moral laws, was cut to the quick that his country should prefer a demagogue and a knave to a man like himself who had served it patriotically if ironically. His judgment of Shaw was not untinged with jealousy, although he himself would have scorned the insinuation. Which of the passions can disguise itself so cleverly as jealousy in order to become a welcome guest in the houses of those who hate it most?

Fiske's chances for the presidency were not flattering, but he made them assume an obsequious position before his ambition by turning his desires into hopes, his hopes into belief, and arguing that when the decisive hour came the bandage would fall from America's eyes and she would see her mistake. He prayed that this might come to pass more for his daughter Georgia's sake than for his own. His

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conscience told him that he owed her the presidency, and unless that debt were paid there could be no peace for his mind.

He catechised Bruce unsparingly concerning the forthcoming convention, and the answers came with a bluntness and rapidity that would have delighted him had they been more favorable to his desires.

"Yes," said Fiske, knitting his ponderous brows, when Bruce had done, "Shaw has Anthony Wyckoff's support, and that would seem to mean a good deal just now. They say, you know, that a candidate without Wyckoff's backing stands no more show before the convention than a spell-binder who attacks the reputations of Washington or Lincoln. I could have had Wyckoff's support if I had bargained for it with my independence; his go-betweens came to me before they went to Shaw; but I declared myself frankly upon the question of mail subsidies, and they went away disgruntled. I can't stand up for what my conscience doesn't approve, and I won't. All the same, the rope I've paid out to Shaw on the subsidy bill may hang him on the platform of the convention instead of lifting him from it to the presidency."

There was a half sardonic, half humorous light in Fiske's fierce eyes, an expression on his bronzed face that Bruce had never seen there before, and it set him as far adrift as if the stream of conversation were carrying him miles past the subject of discussion. Fiske drew a parallelogram on the sand of the path with his cane and went on:

"I've often told you, McAllister, that I consider most of your views madly radical, but at the same time I don't believe in handing the United States over to a man like Wyckoff, and saying, 'Here, you tell us what you want done with the machine and we'll do it.' There's no use in being

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President if there is to be another President over you. I can't creep under any man's thumb, it isn't in my nature. However, a good deal of this Shaw boom is mere noise and inflation. You can take it from me that Shaw never will be nominated."

Fiske rose, drawing out his watch. "I see I must go now." He swung his cane jauntily and remarked: "Shaw reminds me of that statue of General Jackson over there; it's a ludicrously bad piece of art; but it's so unfortunately well balanced on its hind legs that it would take an absurd amount of effort to upset it."

"But what a noise it will make when it does tumble!" rejoined Bruce.

Fiske nodded, moving on with his sure step, his nervous cane scattering the pebbles on the path to the right and the left as if they were so many Sydney P. Shaws. Bruce watched him and, guessing what was going on in his friend's mind, he smiled to himself. Suddenly the Speaker drew to a halt, lifted his hat, and stood talking with his bared head. A slight curve in the path, a protrusion of a tree branch hid from Bruce the woman to whom evidently Fiske was talking, as the tangle of moss and vine in some long-neglected garden might screen the statue of its protecting goddess from view. A moment afterwards the Speaker's burly body passed on and then, to Bruce's mild astonishment, Miss Inez Hammersmith came marching up slowly to the path that led to his bench, much as if she were the tutelary goddess of the square and had stepped from her boscage-hidden pedestal into full sight. He rose.

"Lafayette Square seems to have been annexed by Congress this morning," she smiled.

"It would be a pity if it were," he returned, "to dispossess spring and Miss Inez Hammersmith."

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"You might give us the privilege of the floor by special legislation."

"After you have taken it by storm we may be lucky not to be turned out." He entered into her lighter mood with a laugh, and then he passed on to say, "I was wondering who that was whom Fiske's big body hid from view."

"What a splendid opportunity the situation offered to your imagination."

"I dared not use it. My disappointment would have been too great had I guessed you and discovered another."

"But your delight," she bowed, "might have been the greater had you imagined it another and discovered me."

"I could not imagine it greater than it is."

"I shall," she said, seating herself in answer to his invitation; "after so fine a compliment I should be churlish to refuse it."

There was for her a peculiar delight in defying the conventions to occupy that seat—a delight, let us hasten to say, that was none the less great because the chances of being seen at that unaristocratic hour were small.

"I think," he went on, "it's as aggravating to see only one of two persons in a conversation as to hear only one half of a dialogue."

"Do you think so? It depends on the dialogue altogether."

"And on the person hidden."

"Come," she said, her brown eyes serious and staid, glancing at her watch, "my time will be gone in a few minutes and I so wish to know about the last developments of your bill. It interests me immensely."

"It will come up for consideration in the House before long—that is the latest development. The unfortunate let-

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ter episode accomplished that much, anyway. You see, it stirred up the curiosity and sentiment of the country, and they were forced to let the bill go beyond the committee walls to let folks see what it looked like. I was counting on that."

"I wanted to tell you the night you called," she said, her voice warm and low, "how sorry I was about the way they ridiculed and abused you in the newspapers. But you saw the situation? I intended to write afterwards—I did start a letter in fact—but something interrupted and I was obliged to give it over." She neglected to say that the interruption came from within, it being none other than the difficulty and inconvenience she experienced in expressing just what she wished to say and still hold herself aloof from an undignified warmth and a frigidity that might conceal the very sympathy she wished to extend.

"And I meant to tell you that evening, if I could have seen you alone long enough to do it, that you were in the very storm center of the letter episode."

"I was? How, pray?"

"The original letter was dropped on the floor of Mr. Dickinson's studio on that Monday afternoon when Elaine and I met you and Mrs. Ten Eyck there."

"Ah!" she gave a slight start. Her thoughts passed through her mind so rapidly, each suggesting another with which it was associated, that they seemed like a crowd in which she could recognize no distinct face, but from which she gained a distinct impression. The resultant impression in this case was Georgia's expression when she overheard Bruce and herself mention the letter in the studio and Georgia's after-anxiety to trace a certain missing epistle.

"You remember, perhaps," he asked, seeking her confidence, "the way Mrs. Ten Eyck turned around sharply and

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stared at us involuntarily when I spoke about the letter to you?"

"I have," she said, excluding questions on that score, "a distinct recollection of it." And immediately afterwards she asked, like Columbine walking through the door that Harlequin had opened and closing the window through which she had leaped and he wished to follow, "And to this original letter there remains no clew?"

For a second the closed window of conversation aroused his distrust; he had opened all avenues of approach for her; why had she baffled him when he wished to follow? Then Faith pulled Doubt's finger down, and into her hands, to do with what she would, he put his fate. He disclosed all: the night at Ommaney's; the list of names he had secured from Ommaney of congressmen who held stock in the Transoceanic; the unaccountable loss of that invaluable document; the walk home with Ardmore; the early morning reading of the original Wyckoff letter in the shadow of the Carnegie library; Ommaney's vacillation; the broken promise. He paused—inadvertency had all but led him to link Shaw's name with that of the golden Georgia.

"Go on! Go on!" She urged him forward as if she stood with him in the chariot that his horses were pulling toward a winning goal.

He went back to fill in the hurried outline he had sketched, painting in vivid words the history of the Transoceanic, of the part he suspected Shaw of playing in it, and how he had discovered through the agency of little Butler that there was scarcely a man who had accepted a gift of the stock from the Transoceanic who would vote in favor of his Anti-Child Labor bill. The two were linked and interlinked with condemnatory chains.

"When I knew that the Ommaney list was lost beyond

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the hope of recovery," he ended, "I built all my hopes on the Ardmore letter. If Ardmore had kept faith with me, and if I had that letter in my possession, I would make it do service for complete and undermining evidence."

"And if by any good chance the letter was found?" she asked.

"Then victory would surely be within my reach," he answered. "I would flash the recovered letter in the House before the astonished eyes of Messrs. Shaw and Ommaney and declare that I had come by the telltale Ommaney list in the same manner and the same way. I would threaten to produce it and make public the names of the congressmen who had accepted stock in the Transoceanic if they allowed my Anti-Child Labor bill to go down in defeat. And the bluff will work, because they will be afraid that I might make good, and because their constituents will think if they voted against the bill they must have been bribed with the stock. I have them either way! But at any rate," he ended, "I shall have to face Congress soon and trust to the merits of my bill for victory."

"Oh, if I could find it! If I could only find it!" she exclaimed. "You have interested me in it so deeply, so much of the action has gone on or seems to have gone on under my very eyes, that I feel very much as one does at the theater when one knows what the marplot has done and when one would give warning to the unsuspecting victim of his wiles. What wouldn't I give to find it!"

"I see," he said, "you wish to approach the illusion from a different end, give up your spectator's seat and take a place on the stage."

"It has the virtue at least of being more active, hasn't it?"

"Yes. But the unfortunate hero will be none the better

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off for it. For in either case you will lose your interest in him when the curtain drops and he stands justified before the world that ridiculed him."

Again she detached herself by assuming, to his more bitter disappointment this time, an impersonal attitude. "The impartial critic," she returned, "will hold his judgment in abeyance until the play is done. If we take part in it we may not speak until the audience has pronounced its verdict." She glanced at her watch and signaled her despair at the lateness of the hour.

"I'm in the same predicament," he smiled. "I had an appointment with the President for eleven. I'm ten minutes late, you see." The appointment was rather indefinite, his lateness a mere matter of conjecture.

"The compliment is subtle; I go before I succumb to its craft." Her black hat with its bird-of-paradise plumage, and gray gown, stood out in portraitlike definiteness against the overhanging green of the fern-leaf beech when she bowed her final farewell.

He watched her, vital, full of life and the love of life as the spring morning itself, until she disappeared around the angle of the historic St. John's Church, which, amid its modern surroundings, stood out like an antique in the cabinet of a parvenu's vulgar parlor.

"And I thought her all marble once!" he muttered. "Well, she may be, but I've had my hand on fire that left me colder."

A moment afterwards he hastened across the street to the White House, which loomed forth from the shrubbery like a modest white flower, opening immaculate petals, fold on fold, to a genial sun. The fountains plashed and played musically; the green grass crept affectionately up to the freestone as if it would linger there and not pass on. White

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and purple hyacinths, and tulips of gold, pink, and red, looked longingly up at the balustrade that gave definite outline to the second story. The massive Treasury on one side, the big War, State and Navy building on the other, reminded one that architecture, like politics itself, may force strange relationships, and that harmony in the one case as in the other may suffer rupture if left to chance instead of prearrangement.

Bruce passed under the four-pillared Ionic portico and up the narrow black-walnut staircase to the President's office. The small square room, with its old-fashioned grate and white marble mantel, yellow now with age, simple almost as Bruce's own living room, made democracy's exponent feel at home. Only the secretary's desk that stood between the oblong windows at the end of the room set the mild stamp of contesting officialdom on it. Congressmen, senators, office holders, army and navy officers, politicians, visitors, a diplomat or two, claimed each available inch of space. And still the door opened and the colored doorkeeper passed in and out, bearing cards to the secretary, and still delegations and visitors sought admission.

The President, a tall, thin, white-haired man, moved quickly from caller to caller, dismissing a delegation with a polite word of welcome followed by a suave word of farewell, granting this man's request and that man's petition. Bruce's turn came presently and he said to him, grasping his hand cordially: "Wait, if you can, McAllister; don't run off, I'll be through soon."

The windows back of the secretary's desk, opening on the south portico, attracted Bruce and he edged his way thither. On the white sill of the further window sat a senator and next to him the governor of his State, and the senator whispered sardonically to the governor:

"Have you seen his majesty yet?"

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"No," replied the governor under his breath angrily; "but from what I gather it's useless; the old —— will turn me down."

And still the door closed and shut, and shut and closed, and visitors came in and passed out, some of them timidly as to a sanctuary, others boldly and unannounced. The President, husky of voice now, weary-eyed, moved back and forth transacting momentous and trivial business with equal energy and speed.

Bruce thought of the fair spring morning outside and its whispered promise of peace, and of the faction, the intrigue, the greed that wound their insidious ways here within, and he recalled for the first time since he had read them years ago, the words of the first Harrison, whispered in a death-bed delirium: "My dear madam, I did not direct that your husband should be turned out. I did not know it. I tried to prevent it." It's of a piece with the wisdom of destiny never to tell us where and when our knowledge is to find its particular application; otherwise we might prefer bliss at the expense of instruction.

Bruce turned and gazed out of the window along the green lawns south of the White House, tree and flower bedecked, that sloped away to the Potomac. Soft as the color of silver, time-subdued, Bruce saw its lordly waters curve broadly outward, and flash and sparkle like a field of jewels in the sun. And there amid the generous sward apportioned for it, upward toward the sky towered the Washington Monument, aureoled with a sky of deep turquoise blue.

At length the secretary called Bruce's attention; he turned. The President beckoned, and Bruce joining him they walked through the narrow door and into the Cabinet room. The room was like a man, capable and potent, intent on telling performances, relying on the power of his

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personality rather than his garb to enforce respect. The long table with its chairs pushed under it in suggestive emptiness, ran almost the full length of the floor, charts and portraits claimed the walls; a bookcase and a huge globe held sway in the corners.

"I'm glad to get a chance to talk over your bill with you, McAllister. I know your views express those of the radical wing of the minority," said the President, sinking wearily on the large leather lounge that ran along the wall. The President's eyes looked pathetically tired as he spoke and a deprecatory smile flitted across his wan face—the radical wing of the minority was a phrase for the appearance of which in contemporary politics Bruce was responsible. He looked at Bruce like a man trained by long experience to read character from physiognomy. Always the natural thing for Bruce McAllister to do *was* the natural thing, and he slipped down in his chair, flung his right leg over his left knee and chatted on at his ease.

He pointed out that the Transoceanic Ship Subsidy bill was class legislation, a present of so many millions that the Government was asked to bestow on a handful of kings of commerce; and he hinted at the fact as broadly as he could, that the enemies of his bill in Congress were the allies of the Transoceanic's fortunes. He spoke eloquently of what his own bill meant to the nation and the citizens of the future.

"I confess," said the President when Bruce had done, "that you've called my attention to features in both bills that I hadn't thought of before, and while I can't promise now to work in favor of the one or against the other, still I'll give all you had to say my most earnest consideration. I'm bitterly opposed to the children of the nation being thrown into what you call the 'hopper of capitalism' and being taken out of it crippled and injured, but at the same time, McAllister,

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the trouble with those whom you call your people is that they never know just what they want. The people you inveigh against come here with a definite scheme they want put through; but your people seem utterly without any philosophy; they have no definite views."

"The time is fast coming when they will have, Mr. President; they are becoming more and more self-conscious every day."

"But meanwhile," smiled the President deprecatorily, drawing in his underlip, "the big commercial interests that make the country great come here with clear-cut and sharply defined purposes. Now, where's my choice? Well, I'm glad to have had this confidential chat with you, and when the time comes I won't forget what you've said. If there's anything you think that I can do for your people, come in and let's talk it over. I don't suppose that I can ever do very much; I'm only the President you know, and while the Constitution doesn't say so, my chief duty is to see that our vessel of commerce doesn't smash up against the rocks and drag the rest of us down in the wreck."

"The President," said Bruce to himself on the way downstairs, "seems to be a very nice old gentleman; but all the same it's peculiar the different angles we get on the same job. I suppose it all depends upon the boss for whom you think you're working and the people to whom you think you're delivering the meat."

CHAPTER XIII

ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF SOAPSUDS TO DESTINY

R. R. DICKINSON had taken to the woods for the day, retreating in dismay before that invincible foe of art's unconventionalities, the sworn and mercenary enemy of its traditional love for those picturesque effects that can be obtained only by throwing matter out of its proper place. We refer to the naiad who has her aquatic retreat in the bottom of a pail and who once a fortnight emerges, brush in hand from its surface, foaming with soap, to wage Philistine warfare against the nonconforming Dickinson.

But the Virginian woods, their vernal robe bedecked with the vestal white of the dogwood blossom, allured more for the nonce than the musty studio, and off he went, merely leaving behind him the injunction, more habitual than terrifying, "Don't disturb anything!"

"An' for phwat would th' loikes av me disthurb anything?" soliloquized the Hibernian naiad, proceeding to answer her own query by straightway disturbing everything she could lay her hands on. Over the floor rolled a stream of soapsuds and hot water in amateur rivalry with the lordly Potomac, sounding afar. "The Man of the Mills" trembled lest the naiad take off his head in her mistaken zeal to wash his face. The grand settee, with its spangled and diaphanous drapery, looked as if it would float away through the window, and the Spanish writing desk stood on three

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undecided legs—a proportion not conducive to stability of character or of posture—and in that decidedly dangerous position it had the hardihood to contemplate whether resisting the stream was easier than riding off on the bubbling waters.

The accidental assistance of Mrs. Kelly's scrub brush and her plump shoulder ended its indecision and over it went, throwing out its wooden leaf in terror at its own rashness; while the discourager of hesitancy threw up her arms in dismay at her recklessness and caught the sufferer from it in her stout, rescuing hands. The desk was placed now beyond the reach of danger on shore where the soapy sea broke wrathfully and ineffectually at its feet; but not so its contents, which were scattered in all directions and floated off an easy prey to the elements.

Against this sea of troubles the doughty naiad took up arms and flew with mythological contempt for consequences to the rescue. The waves retreated, surrendering to her incantations and her charms; so quick was she that there seemed twenty-one slight and agile nymphs in twenty-one different places rather than the one adipose naiad fixed inseparably to one set of rheumatic bones. The pile of papers, letters, memoranda, bills, receipts and half finished sketches gave willing witness to her life-saving powers. She put them back where they belonged or where she thought they belonged, and they were so rejoiced to be on dry land after their escape from drowning that they were not disposed to raise any issue on the propriety of their environment.

• The red leather pad and its panoply of blotters proved the least bit ungrateful and stubborn, but Mrs. Kelly, heedless of its protest against the dimensions into which she insisted it should fit, whisked it into the place selected in less than no time. With a groan, wrung from it by this pitiless

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treatment, it dropped a letter on the floor as a dumb plea for a more humane and kindly regard for inanimate objects. Mrs. Kelly stooped to pick it up and restore it to favor, but on noting that the envelope was sealed, stamped and addressed, she could not help concluding that it was meant rather for the person whose name it bore than for herself. Such intelligence, be it observed, is more mythological than human!

“Och, but thim painter byes be careless lads,” said to herself this Hibernian naiad and concluding, as the majority of us will, whether scrubwoman, wife of Croesus, or blue-stocking, or social butterfly, that she knew better what the artist wants than he knows himself, she dried her hands on her apron, walked outside and mailed her discovery. She returned to her task, smiling blissfully at her good deed and accepting in advance the artist’s outpour of thanks. “Ye naden’t min-tion it at all, at all, Mr. Dickinson,” she replied, holding an imaginary conversation with the illustrious. “Many an’ many is the toime ye wint out av yer way to do me a favor. Shure it was nothin’ at all, the mail box bein’ just outside av th’ dour an’ thin th’ sthamp was on th’ letter so I hadn’t to break a nickel to buy a sthamp, which I ginerally do thim few toimes I sind a loine to me boy Moike, that’s in Philadelphia.”

It was ten in the morning when the naiad ended her monologue, divested herself of her apron and other garments that in this Comstockian era of literature we dare not mention and disappeared—whether at the bottom of the pail or elsewhere we know not. And it was at one o’clock of the same afternoon that her maid handed to Miss Inez Hammer-smith the very letter over which the scrubwoman had waxed voluble. So it is the most humble, all unbeknown to themselves, may influence the destinies of the mighty, and we can-

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not but wonder whether Mrs. Kelly would have disappeared with her pail (or in it) in the same contented spirit if she had known what effect her soap bubbles would have on the path that the aristocratic Inez Hammersmith was to tread.

There were two other letters in the same mail and Inez of course opened the most interesting last. Her ingenuity having nothing better to do, tried to arrive at the name of the correspondent and the nature of the contents by the handwriting on the envelope. Baffled here, it turned to the commonplace method of breaking the seal. A moment afterwards the letter fluttered out of her hand on the floor, and her eyes, as wide open as astonishment could hold them, followed it.

To solve the mystery of its presence fascinated her at first, perplexed her afterwards, bewildered her finally—a process familiar to youth attempting to unriddle the meaning of life. She gave it over, turning away from the impassive sphinx, smiling enigmatically at her whys, whences and whithers. The moral issue besieged her. Should she return it to Georgia? Honesty said yes. But sophistry counseled no, arguing that Georgia had not disclosed to her the nature of the lost, misaddressed letter and that this might not be it, anyway. Here, moreover, was the opportunity to take her much-coveted place in the game of intrigue that Georgia herself had played with such enviable, masterly skill. Inez was not romantic; but she throbbed with the love of life, and life ebbs and flows in plot and counterplot.

She recalled with a peculiar start, as if fate had prompted them, her words to Bruce in Lafayette Square. They were in the nature of a promise, and would it not be foolish to listen to a punctilio and run the risk of being laughed to scorn by opportunity afterwards? Her heart whispered that affection for Bruce McAllister, a desire to further his fortunes,

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were makeweights that she was tossing on the scale to pull conscience down; but she frowned the whisper into a sullen silence. Against a cabal so formidable what chance had unattractive honesty, standing alone? It acknowledged itself in error and beat a gracious retreat from the field.

Bruce, she knew, was appointed by an arrangement with the minority leader and the Steering Committee to speak on behalf of his bill on the morrow, but Inez concluded that if the letter was to lend service in accordance with the weight of its merit, it ought to be in Bruce McAllister's hands to-day. Time to him probably was precious beyond price. She looked out of the window on Farragut Square, her gaze wandering absently from the flower beds to the figure of the admiral fixed in eternal bronze, and from the admiral it wavered back to the flower beds; then her resolution was taken. She would leave untrod the unending circle of Washington calls for the afternoon, break her calendared appointments and seek Bruce out at the Capitol.

She strolled leisurely, choosing the longer road, veering her course into the tree-shaded lawn of the Mall. Spring accompanied her every foot of the way, and so finally she entered the Capitol itself, standing citadel-like on its hill.

Meanwhile, Mr. Bruce McAllister was well on the way with his speech in favor of his own bill, for the Steering Committee at the last moment compelled a change in plans, throwing its whole programme for the remainder of the session forward in order to save a day. Bruce was perfectly amenable; a day in so far as he could see made no difference at all in results. If the maker of dies could hold converse with the morrow, eternity might still be waiting for the cast.

The moment it was heralded around the Capitol unexpectedly that Bruce McAllister "was up" the restaurant, lobbies and lounging rooms yielded to the greater attraction;

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senators crossed over through the connecting corridors; unoccupied seats on the floor were scarce as unexpectant listeners. Correspondents scampered to their seats in the Press gallery; and soon the visitors' galleries offered no discouragement to the orator by their frigid emptiness. Paulledet, of Vermont, literally caught his death of cold—a deplorable loss to his country—by jumping out of his hot bath in the basement, rushing upstairs and exposing himself to the draught.

Each listener awaited the entrance of that most interesting presence, the unexpected, and the quiet had the dramatic intensity that befits the stage when no one knows, save the actor, how things are going to turn out; and in this case the actor, not knowing himself, helped to create a situation ideally intense. McAllister undoubtedly had brilliant qualities, ran the public version before the lifting of the curtain, but he had made a hopeless fool of himself in committee over the Ardmore epistle, and the question now was whether or not he could remount the pedestal from which his own folly so bunglingly had tossed him. Rumor even had noised it about that at last he had gained possession of the compromising letter of his boast and that he would read it. If so, whom would it compromise beyond Sir Anthony and Ardmore of Virginia? Shaw, maybe? It is a terrible but none the less absorbing spectacle to see a valuable reputation go to smash, especially when it happens to belong to another; just as when we see a frail costly vase (of our neighbor's) tipped from the mantel, and we hold our breath in suspense while it threatens to evade a protective hand and establish a disastrous acquaintanceship with the floor.

Even Edward Donovan Butler had his doubts, and although he knew very well what Bruce would say long before he said it, having gone over the outline of his speech with him, still he was fearful lest Bruce try to lift too great a

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weight with his too small enginery, and lest the whole machinery give way with a crash under the strain and hurl its engineer in the air. If he only had the Ardmore epistle to complete the chain of evidence he might lift himself by its links to—— But Butler was not the man to deal with miraculous “ifs,” and he bobbed up and down in his seat so violently that it seemed only to serve the purpose of throwing him out of it.

Bruce was proclaiming the object of his bill in terse, vivid words. His full, musical voice, out of which the shrill note already had passed, pulled down as it were the walls of shop and factory that Congress might see the children at work. Shuttles beat back and forth in the looms, guided by thin, aching fingers, watched by sharp, hungry eyes, made sad by cares no child should know. The wheels turned and whirled; suddenly the piercing scream of a mangled body echoed through the big House.

So did Mammon suffer the little children to come unto him!

CHAPTER XIV

THE GODDESS DESCENDS FROM THE MACHINE

MEANWHILE, unconscious of what was going on inside of the Capitol, Inez stood on the terrace of that marble mount, porticoed with bewildering rows of lofty Corinthian pillars. Climbing upward slowly the immensity of it had impressed her; looking downward she received æsthetic enjoyment from the graceful retreat of the giant stairway.

She was about to step inside to begin a search for Bruce when spring whispered to her cajolingly to stay awhile outdoors. The view from the high terrace was so surpassingly, so enchantingly fair! Pennsylvania Avenue, sweeping outward, lost itself in the wavering haze of the distance. The city peeped through an olive-green canopy of tree leaves freshly opened. A purple haze, shot through with russet gleams, hung discernible as smoke over the zigzag line cut in the sky by the Virginia hills and the heights of Georgetown. The purple softened slowly down to an unobtrusive gray where it embraced the Potomac's fretful waters. The Doric front of the Lee house in Arlington looked forth invitingly from its bulging brow of hill.

She observed, glancing downward again, the number of people alighting from the Pennsylvania Avenue cars near the Peace Monument and hastening into the basement of the House side of the Capitol or up its broad tier on tier of

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stairs. She suspected nothing of the unusual until she overheard a man passing under the huge pillared portico, say to his companion: "McAllister is surely giving them hell! God! I wish I'd been there when his speech began!"

Spring's fascination was gone for her, and detaching herself easily from it she rushed inside with a haste that left all thought of dignity behind. Unmindful of elevators, half forgetful of the very mission on which she had come, resolved to hold counsel with herself afterwards, she tripped up the stairway to the floor above. In front of the plain doors, paneled with glazed glass, that opened into the various galleries, she saw long cues of anxious people confronting the grim doorkeepers and beseeching admission.

She was calling her precipitancy to account for rushing her so thoughtlessly up the stairs before she had heard the voice of common sense and sent in the letter to Bruce by a page, and she turned excitedly to retrace her steps when that very excitement inspired her with a seemingly better idea.

She hastened into the Press gallery and passed the rows of clicking telegraph machines when a doorkeeper arising from his desk stopped her with due Washington politeness to ask the nature of her errand. She wished to see Edward Donovan Butler of the *Chicago Democrat*; and in order peremptorily to summon him, she scribbled on one of her cards, which she enclosed in an envelope, "I have the Ardmore-Wyckoff letter." Then she followed this guardian of the upper regions, who differs from those of the lower in that he wishes to keep people out instead of letting them in, until they reached the comfortable waiting room where he left her to her own resources, while he went outside to look for Butler on the benches.

She poured herself a glass of lemonade from the silver pitcher and quaffed it. Her mouth was parched and her

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tongue touched lips that cried for moisture. She moved as if to seat herself in one of the chairs at the end of the long table, but, in obedience to the inner throb of restless nerves, she strode up and down the deserted apartment.

Butler appeared, distractedly crumpling her card in his hand, looking for her with a glance that betrayed his fear lest the whole thing prove a hoax. She placed the letter in his hand, speechless.

He invoked his favorite divinity with a groan more despairing than worshipful, shot out of the doors, tore down the corridor, and jumped into a descending elevator. His movements had such a bewildering and kinematographic continuity that the jumping, the shooting, and the tearing seemed but one and the same and all in one.

Inez hurried into the corridor and finding herself an atom in a crowd again, she remembered joyfully that her purse contained a ticket admitting her to one of the exclusive galleries where she could detach herself from the excluded mass and become a segregated and privileged entity. But here another waiting line frowned on her impatience; the suave keeper of the gates expressed his regret at the lack of an empty seat. Every single nerve at war with the calmness she wished to maintain now of all times, she stood distraught, perturbed, knowing not what to do nor where to turn, when the voluptuous contour of the Countess Villari, leaning on the arm of the Polish minister, caught her eager glance from far down the corridor.

The Count paused in front of the Diplomatic gallery to draw his ticket of admission from his purse. "Wait for me!" Inez's extremity all but prompted her to call aloud, when the door swung half open and the Countess disappeared within. The taller figure of the minister was about to follow suit when Inez's gloved finger was laid pleadingly on the

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sleeve of his frock coat. He looked down with Slavonic imperturbability on this unseemly exhibit of emotion and his monocle only expressed his deprecation of it when she had turned her back in order to precede him inside the gallery.

There were three vacant seats in the second row of the narrow sloping gallery and they moved to take possession of them. Across the aisle from Inez, Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck was seated beside a young member of the British embassy. She turned as if an inner shock rather than any outward confusion had announced Inez's presence and she detached herself from Bruce's speech long enough to beam a welcome on the new arrivals.

Inez gazed around the length of the full galleries that lifted their gaping crowds toward the ceiling. Even the usually empty Executive gallery numbered its exalted occupants. Then her eyes, trying to establish her relation to this theatric environment, turned to the floor below, wandering from the eagle that flapped protective wings over the ironical Fiske to the concentric circles of mahogany desks, the radiating aisles of which curved toward completion on either side of the Speaker's imposing marble desk. To Inez it seemed like a huge web with all its cross threads alive and freighted with human beings.

Through the glass-paneled ceiling, set in its iron frame, the light fell with a chiaroscuro effect on Bruce, throwing his rail-like figure and his swarthy, coarse-featured face into a relief that tested its quality as rigorously as would a search-light itself. She was struck by its strength. It appealed to her over that separating abyss as something wherein she might find succor in an hour of her own weakness.

Then his voice claimed her—the same voice that had compelled her admiration and carried her whither it listed years ago in that little frowzy hall in Chicago. Eagerly her atten-

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tion flew to him and she rode out on the crest of one smooth-flowing sentence to catch the beginning of the next.

His rich, full, and golden voice rolled on and on, pouring and pouring out its inexhaustible music. He was paying his respects to commerce. Yesterday Baal and Moloch were demanding black slaves for a sacrifice at their altars. The day before it had been white slaves. Now their priests were calling for the little children. The ritual changed from age to age; the religion never! Wherein lay the cure? In the destruction of Baal and Moloch!

Commerce was the slave driver, whip in hand, that was forcing the children to become beasts of burden to carry loads that rightly considered should be distributed equally among all the elders of the land. Did they question the sorry rôle that commerce was assuming now? Why then were the great interests opposed to the bill? There was that famous letter written by Anthony Wyckoff forbidding it to pass beyond the door of its proper committee.

Laughter silenced him boisterously.

The interruption recalled Inez to herself and her thoughts moved back to where they were when he had claimed them. Where was the letter at this moment? Did he have it? Was it his invincible weapon now to batter his way to success through the ranks of the enemy? Impatience throbbed like fever in her veins and she thought of arising to seek out Butler and inquire. Then gazing restlessly around she caught sight of Butler on the raised white benches of the Press gallery and noticed his sharp eyes fastened as if in eager search on the floor below. In search of what? she asked, pressing her gloved hands against her hot cheeks.

His voice was rolling its deep tones through the silence again. The occasion deserved laughter for its ruling spirit,

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he said. There was a humorous side to that now celebrated epistle, which had been written in an ink of a peculiar alchemy to be made visible or invisible as the convenience of its writer should determine.

Her thoughts divided into two currents, one carrying toward the illuminated chambers of her brain the words of Bruce, the other bearing forward the visual images she received from the forlorn Butler, his eyes on the floor, bobbing up and down on his seat. And now these two currents seemed to merge and now to separate, and again to be racing in opposite directions. Usually the most possessed of women, she was utterly distracted. Her head was in a whirl.

Then all at once she saw on the floor of the House a little page, with a letter in his hand; he stood at Bruce's back, trying with all the wiles known to embarrassed youth to attract the attention of the orator whose wisdom and eloquence intimidated him. So, even as we write, may good fortune stand with its message behind the back of him who reads! "Turn, turn!" she was tortured by the mad desire to call out to him. And Inez obliged to restrain Inez, involuntarily clapped a warning hand over her mouth.

Unmindful of this Ganymede, cloud hidden, who stood at his elbow with Venus's message, Bruce spoke on. His veracity, he said, had been questioned, but he wished to repeat that the contents of the Ardmore letter were such as he had charged. Let those who knew the truth deny if they dared that the original letter had been dropped on the floor of a certain Washington studio! The door of the studio had been almost battered down by the men and women, partisans of his opponents, in their mad endeavor to recover the lost treasure. The artist himself, his honor challenged, had been offered a Venetian consulship, in return for that incriminating bit of paper.

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Ommaney rose to his feet. Him the mighty Fiske gaveled down.

The golden Georgia's face was aflame. Hers was the sinking sensation, each throbbing nerve screaming plaintively for something whereto it might cling. What if in the heat and fire of this controversy that veil be destroyed behind which her identity was hidden and she be dragged forth, shorn of honor, to her father's view?

Lifting her eyes as if the mere looking beyond herself would take her outside of herself, Georgia's glance fell on Inez, and then her aroused curiosity subtracted more and more from the torture of her suspense. Inez's face, her movements, her muscles held at tension as if to repress her inward agony struggling for expression, her unconscious gestures carried on a pantomime that the quick-witted Georgia was able to translate into words. She saw all and guessed much.

Bruce's voice sank to a minor key; humor was the instrument that accompanied him. His situation in the committee room when he had come prepared to give in evidence one letter and had been obliged to hear the reading of quite another, reminded him of the negro who, satisfied with the catch of a seven-pound bullhead, went to sleep on his laurels. A less favored brother chancing along replaced the bullhead with a tiny perch. When the darky, awakening, beheld the transformation he exclaimed, "Ef dat bullhead had only shrunk I'd serspect de rum what I drunk, but when it done change entirely I naturally serspect Andrew Jackson Jefferson ben fishing on dis pier, too."

"Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman from Illinois wishes to insinuate—" Shaw was on his feet waving a denunciatory arm, his cultivated taste inimical to humor of this crude slapstick sort.

Bing! bang! "The gentleman from Pennsylvania is out

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of order; he will be seated," drawled Fiske, clasping the gavel amatively.

"This is tyranny, Mr. Speaker, I wish to protest."

"The gentleman from Pennsylvania protests too much. Unlike the gentleman from Illinois, who pins his faith to what he calls the bigger democracy, the chair believes that the House is in need of a benevolent despot. The gentleman will be seated!"

Laughter followed in the wake of the Speaker's ironical drawl, but the grim Fiske gaveled it into silence. And it was during this grizzly episode when Fiske's guillotinelike gavel was separating Shaw's voice from his body that Bruce felt the hand of destiny pluck with the insistence of despair at his coat. He turned and relieved his beardless and fatigued messenger of his message.

In the gallery, Inez, breathing easier, released a wrenched thumb from a torturing fist. To Ganymede vanishing heavenward she sent an unvoiced thankfulness from her heart's depths. Butler sank back for a moment's restoration before he played again at battledore and shuttlecock with the bench. Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck's curiosity merely joined forces with the suspense against which it had warred before. The minutes harrowed her.

Meanwhile, as the laughter ebbed slowly away into fainter and fainter echoes, Bruce's mind had made a conquest of the letter. He was so utterly occupied in bending its words to his purpose that he gave to the explanation of its appearance only the first flash of thought that surprise waved like a light across his mind.

He returned to his anecdote of the fishes, usurping the author's right to lay a trifling and sacrilegious hand on his own masterpiece. He was aware of the wily approach of the fisherman and he had pretended somnolence merely in

order the better to trip up the thief and send him, flying head over heels, into deep water. Behold—proof of his wakefulness—the very original letter! His voice poured forth all the volume of sound in its control, and that diminutive piece of paper—such were the dimensions that drama lent it—waved triumphant, fold on fold, flaglike, in the vast hall.

Consternation, retreating sullenly before it, leaped from desk to desk. There was in the oblique eyes of Sydney P. Shaw a glint such as one may chance to see in a watchdog's when brought to bay at night. The resourceful Ommaney fell prone, stripped of expedient, his inventiveness reduced to formulating uncomplimentary names for the more immediate ancestors of Bruce McAllister. Fiske, impartial as time, with history's ironical disinterestedness, held a threatening gavel aloft to recommend his own attitude to his subjects.

And just as Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck's attention was divided between watching the expression that flitted across the face of Inez Hammersmith and the understanding of Bruce's words, so was her heart divided between sorrow for Shaw and joy for her father; since she knew now, foreshadowing Anthony's keen displeasure, that Sydney's chances for the presidency were diminished and her father's chances increased. She realized too, for the first time in full measure, the tragedy of a position that inevitably would involve her deeper and deeper in its awful toils. She divined now that she could not be false to one of the two men she loved best of all men without being false to the other.

Bruce was reading Sir Anthony's original letter to Ardmore, interspersing notes and comments of his own with such wanton fecundity that the parent text seemed in danger of going unheard amid the hilarious clamor of the offspring called into being by it. The original letter, he remarked, had been inspired by Anthony's fear lest the country and

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Congress refuse to exploit the child, and the second had been prompted by Anthony's fear that he be exploited by Congress and the country. The national university itself was, of course, an afterthought, designed to make Bruce McAllister ridiculous and to inveigle the country into believing that it was Sir Anthony's intention to educate the mind of the youth and not destroy the body of the child.

When his audience thought that the climax had come and interest would slip down on the receding line of the triangle, Bruce sent one sensation in pursuit of another. He was far from wishing to intimate that votes against the Anti-Child Labor bill had been purchased by gifts of stock in the Trans-oceanic, but he had in his pocket a list of names that might show, after the vote on his bill was taken, that there was a striking relationship between the enemies of the one and the recipients of the other. The two rosters might make interesting reading when published for American students of comparative perfidy.

Even Ommaney and Shaw, both of whom knew that the telltale list of Bruce's threat had been recaptured and destroyed, suffered for a second from as great a stampede of their wits as the more enlightened members of the House. They had seen the man perform one miracle, and fear drawing the wool over the eyes of logic, told them there was no reason why he could not work as many as he chose. Then they recovered from the panic into which he had thrown them momentarily and Ommaney jumped to his feet simultaneously with Shaw shouting:

"Mr. Speaker, we challenge the gentleman from Illinois to produce such a list."

The bold skeptic shall not lack followers among those who would rather doubt than believe, and when faith begins to slacken let the worker of miracles rest satisfied with a

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single performance and retreat, refusing to bring to pass another.

The spirit of insurrection was agog, a hissing sound, slow and sibilant, arose, gradually increasing higher and higher in fury and volume until it all but drowned out the powerful voice of Bruce, heard through it, if we may liken sound to sight, as the rays of a candlelight seen through a mist. Fiske said afterwards he could feel the atmosphere become surcharged with rebellion and anger, and the spirit of it beat like rain against his marble desk.

The sergeant-at-arms ran forward with his mace; Shaw and Ommaney sank protesting but unconquered in their seats. Fiske's gavel thundered its Bing! bang! through the vast hall. The more timid capitulated; the braver, so few as to be comparatively insignificant, were forced to follow suit. Down came Fiske's hammer—the final clap to clear the terrorized field—and his voice droned and drawled:

“The House is a deliberative body, or it was a deliberative body before it became a mob. It will, therefore, come to order! The hissing of geese once saved an ancient capital from the destruction of its enemies; the members need not take it upon themselves out of emulation to perform that function now for our modern Capitol, since it is guarded over by a sergeant-at-arms and police.”

Laughter started; his thunder, crashing ominously, silenced it. A handkerchief, fluttering softly from the gallery above to the thick carpeted floor below, would have seemed an intruder. The spirit of insurrection was crushed and it crept away bruised and broken-spirited from the marble throne of the terrible Thor, who stood there subtly contemplative, leaning on the symbol of his indisputable authority.

CHAPTER XV

THE FRUITS OF VICTORY

IT was a wonderful oratorical effort! Wonderful!" whispered Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck across the aisle to Inez Hammersmith when Bruce seated himself amid a sort of curtained stillness. Georgia's face beamed as with a sincere joy at the hero's vindication of himself. Inez, nodding, observed her friend's pallor, striking when thrown into contrast with her mass of bright, golden hair, calling into sharper relief by its impartial absence of color, the strong features of the large face. She was about to reply, grasping her enthusiasm with a firm hand, when the applause broke faint at first, then with a stormlike abandon.

The honest provoked it; then the dishonest joined in as if to save their reputations by calling attention to the company they kept, finally freeing themselves as if by the use of intoxicants from what they were and becoming what they wanted to be. Their ardor led at last what it had followed docilely at first. His unmasked batteries had broken down party walls and the Republicans waxed as enthusiastic as the Democrats. Primal emotions, not the subtle distinctions of a too complex civilization, sat as dictator over the hour. Fiske pounded for order, but his heart not being in his work he pounded in vain. Our hero, shaking hands, grinning broadly, acknowledging congratulations, accepted his triumph with a modesty that he himself might have confessed was

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more becoming than sincere. He was back on his pedestal, folly dethroned, looking loftily down on an admiring world that had bespattered him with ridicule when he fell.

Quiet was regnant once more; the Neptunal gavel controlled at least the waves of sound. A Republican leader attacked Bruce's bill, hurling himself against its weaknesses—sentimentalism, sensationalism, injury to business and unconstitutionality. The letter, the hints at bribery, and all that sort of thing were inconsequential, meretricious. He thrust them aside disdainfully. The bill itself and only the bill merited the close consideration of the House. His repeated admonition that a vote in the negative might prove dishonesty was disregarded. The suspicion of graft was too strong to permit the taking of chances. In the coming fall election it would be much easier to explain why they had voted for the bill than why they had tried to defeat it. The age is hard on innocence! For the guiltless to lose their reputation is lamentable; to lose their reputation and their Transoceanic stock at one fell swoop lies beyond the depth of sorrowing tears to express. But since the Anti-Child Labor bill and the Transoceanic Ship Subsidy bill are mortal and irreconcilable enemies, to receive tribute from the latter is to acknowledge one's unfitness to enter the temple of the former.

McAllister is manning the lifeboat, named in letters of electric effulgence "Anti-Child Labor Bill." Hasten to climb aboard its protective side or else be engulfed by the swirling waters of Public Opinion! Save himself who can! Jettison your Ship Subsidy stock lest it sink with you and the omnivorous sea scavengers make food of both! And let the pure of heart take comfort while the gilded and decorated paper sinks!—the Ship Subsidy bill will go down in defeat soon and its stock be worthless as the buried hulks it is sent to join.

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Thus do two hundred and sixty-five redoubtable sons of the Republic pull laborious oars to send the McAllister bill on the way toward Enrolment peak and land it safely into Engrossing harbor. Never did honest sailors, conscience free, welcome more heartily the oncoming night and its promise of sweet rest.

Clambering ashore, we drop our marine metaphor. Already the lateness of the hour has driven the less enthusiastic from the galleries, and when Fiske's hammer clashed against the marble of his desk for the last time the dusk was unrolling its dark curtain, and there was something of a rush for the aisles, the corridors, and the elevators. The Count Vilari, his wife and his monocle, left when they began to be bored, which was over an hour ago, murmuring to themselves "Oh, these Americans!"

Inez passed out with Georgia and her escort, the stalwart young Englishman, from the embassy. Being an Englishman, who shall say from his expression whether he was bored or not bored, and being an Englishman from the embassy, who shall have insolence enough to ask? Georgia's arm slipped with a clamorous affection around Inez's waist, declaring to herself as she did so that in men only would she believe hereafter! Inez had betrayed her. The letter had been in her possession since the day of its loss, and she had merely awaited the dramatic moment to give it to her lover. The artist, whose candor she had challenged so persistently, had spoken the truth. So with a sort of shock to her protesting femininity did Georgia accept the prejudice against her sex, and so may a woman's arm slip affectionately around the waist of another and be miles removed from expressing what its owner feels.

Inez left Georgia awaiting the overcrowded elevators that came slowly up as if from the bowels of the earth, in

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charge of England and her embassy while she moved on in the direction of the east stairway, past the uninspiring row of uninspired portraits and the huge canvas over the first landing that depicts Lincoln in the act of reading his Emancipation Proclamation to his Cabinet. In this painting the critical R. R. might have found much to admire—in its size. But lucky the woman so richly endowed spiritually that she need but turn her eyes inward, away from walls made dismal by art's failures, and say: "Here is beauty sufficient unto itself!" And Inez, smiling, happy over the wonders her dazzling diplomacy had brought to pass, tripped along, all absorbed in her own wealth of thought. Whither her disregard of her surroundings would have led her, if a voice had not made her look without, we know not.

"So there you are! I was just coming up in search of you! How lucky!"

It was Bruce McAllister, hat in hand, who stood before her, his dark face wearing that half gratified, half startled expression of one suddenly stumbling on the object of one's search. Inez saw Butler's spruce, little form turn suddenly and disappear downstairs.

"The play is done. Now what does the impartial critic say?" he asked, reverting to a former conversation. He paid her the compliment, in the full flush of his glory, of remembering.

"You must not ask my opinion. It cannot be impartial since I left the critic's chair to take so unexpected a part on the stage."

How for an adept man her answer throws wide open the gates of opportunity! And Bruce, before they are shut, enters with: "Ordinarily one would regret the loss of a fine critic, but when a great critic is lost to merely give a still greater actor a place on the stage the world is the gainer;

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and that small part of the world known as Bruce McAllister was saved from ruin by it."

"Please say no more about it!"

"I should be ungrateful if I didn't."

Her face grew firm and serious. She assumed again the impersonal attitude. It was as if she were fearful that the part she had played in his victory might give him the right to presume the existence of a greater affection than for reasons of her own she wished him to discover. On the other hand, he was prone to consider the associations made by that letter as a sort of bridge constructed by Venus's minions with infinite pains, over which he might cross to the land of heart's desire. He had rushed toward her, as it were, with open arms, and while he was still suffering from the surprise and humiliation of the repulse, he did not intend to surrender a position so strategic without a struggle.

"May I ask how you came by the letter, anyway? My curiosity gnaws; relieve its pains!" Footsteps echoed through the corridors of belated visitors, of congressmen and employees hastening homeward.

She smiled enigmatically, inwardly pleased at the secret she controlled.

"You mean it is to remain of the mysteries?"

"Always," she answered. "It is late; I must go now." It was a violent turning of the course of conversation.

"May I go with you?"

"As far as the cars, if you will let drop the subject of the letter."

He lapsed into a respectful but rebellious obedience, wondering like an enemy during truce how he might best open warfare again. They walked outside, pausing for a moment on the terrace. In the lowering dusk, tinted with the vivid green of tree tops, here and there streaked with the gold

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of a light prematurely lit, Washington, with its streets radiating out from the massive Capitol as from a huge hub, lay like a great wheel at rest, wearied from the work of the day.

"It would seem to me to be the worst kind of ingratitude if I should leave without firmly establishing my thankfulness."

She answered him not, thinking to herself, "I lingered here a while ago, his fate in my hands, playing with it." He stood pondering over the reason why she appeared so careless of his thanks when she evidently had gone to such infinite pains to win them. Coquetry seemed too small an explanation for so true a woman and he scorned it. The thought gave him the boldness to say:

"After all, you must have thought a good deal of me to have secured that letter and put it into my hands!"

"Isn't the craving for excitement an adequate explanation?"

"Not at all. If mere excitement were your purpose, you could have gained more of it by giving the letter to Shaw."

"But motives of honesty prompted me; the letter really belonged to you."

"Only because you thought so. You made honor and honesty a matter of sentiment. So if you insist I can only feel my gratitude and leave it unexpressed."

Again, as if unrelenting, as if decided to spurn instead of to accept the tribute he offered, she remained silent. In the shadow of the Peace Monument they waited for the car; she spoke of it in terms that would not have flattered its sculptor had he been there to have heard her. "I shall be where there is statuary soon," she said, with assumed carelessness.

"Do you mean that you are to leave here?" His dark,

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coarse-featured face peered at her wistfully. The car rounded the curve.

"At the end of the month, for Paris," she answered.

"To return to Washington?"

"It depends on what my father and mother determine." She sought shelter in the equivocation.

"And your own personal desires?"

"Here comes my car." She shook hands with him and lightly mounted the halting car, and then rapidly rolled out of his sight.

Late that night Butler, calling on Bruce to talk over at length with him the eventful proceedings of that day, found the hero in his den at work on a document of interminable length. His unlit pipe was in his mouth, the feet of his long legs were twisted around the chair, his chest and head were bent far over the paper. Every once in a while Butler turned to look at the page after page of manuscript that Bruce continued to pile on his cluttered table.

"Writing your will, Bruce?" he asked finally.

Bruce unhooked his feet slowly, tipped his chair back and looked at the ceiling studiously, while the blue died out of the irises of his eyes. "No, Ed," he answered mournfully, "I could write that on the end of my thumb."

"Bruce, be candid; is it a woman troubling you?"

"Yes, it is, Ed," he answered forlornly. He rose and walked up and down the compact room in his short, jerky steps; then he shrilled, his face a sight to behold: "Ed, I'm in love with the most beautiful and the most heartless woman on earth. A coquette, a——"

Strange, incomprehensible, buried beyond his or our own efforts to solve it, is the motive that inspired him to sully his lips with that word, above all to apply it to the woman he acknowledged to be worthy of his love. Butler found it

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hard work to believe his ears. He looked at Bruce as if fearing the man had gone mad, and when he was about to express himself in unminced terms, there sat Bruce with his swarthy face buried in his large hands, the warm tears trickling down his cheeks.

"Tell me about it, Bruce," said Butler, touched now somehow to the core of him.

But not one word could Butler get out of him, and not one word more could Bruce get out of himself, try as they both did to the utmost of their respective abilities.

Bruce shook his head firmly and proceeded to tear into shreds the sheets on which he had wasted such effort. They formed a long and rambling declaration of his love for Inez, a peculiar epistle—half businesslike, stating all the "ands" and the "buts," and half headlong and passionate; and he knew very well before he penned a word of it that no eye but his own would ever get a glimpse of its contents.

"Ed," he grinned suddenly, while going on with his work of destruction, "it's more or less human to count your chickens before they hatch; but it's kind of inhuman, I guess, to smash your good eggs for fear they won't chick."

BOOK THREE



CHAPTER I

A WHITE NIGHT

YOUR people, McAllister, are just as well off outside where they are—in the first place it's an extremely mild March evening, and in the second place if they got in here they would only be disillusioned, anyway." So, pointing to the crowd gathered around the high iron fences outside, did the ironical Fiske speak to Bruce McAllister in the parlors of the Polish embassy.

They stood in the bay window, a little removed from a choice assembly, gathered, so to say, by eliminating all but the most distinguished people in Washington and tightening the zone of welcome until it embraced only the elect. The result, of course, was brilliancy; an effulgence of the kind made where stars of equal magnitude sing together, and where the radiance of the social heavens would have been diminished if any one single planet had dropped behind the horizon of it. Gold epaulets shone on the shoulders of stern commanders of the nation's ships and its soldiers, gallooned diplomats, whose costumes were as far apart as the nations they represented, Cabinet members—in a word it was all that one might expect on an occasion chosen by the Polish minister to introduce a visiting admiral, general and statesman from his own country to Washington. These dignitaries, we say parenthetically, told our reporters before they left for their native shores, that never in their lives had they seen a more im-

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pressive body of men and women; therefore, those whose plebeian point of vantage was in the darkness of the outside, lit though it was by calcium lights, may know what the enchanted realm on the inside was like.

Fiske's remark, of course, paved the way for the apostle of democracy to expatiate on the time when law of caste and iron fences should make no distinctions between man and his brother. His people becoming the only people on earth, they were bound to inherit all the earth. But we are asked to attend the reception at the home of the Polish embassy and not to enter Utopia. Let us employ the interim rather to explain that the legislature of Illinois, breaking a deadlock, had sent Bruce McAllister from Congress to the Senate to fill the four unexpired years of the expired Senator Reeves, who, according to those disappointed wretches who longed for his toga, had devoted as many years to dying as most men to living.

Therefore, let us not be surprised when Fiske receded and Inez Hammersmith, removing herself from that background of silks, laces and diplomatic and martial gold, and advancing toward Bruce, addressed him as Senator McAllister. Bruce himself felt an inexplicable tremor at Inez's appearance. He had expected her; he had come thither with the sole hope of seeing her, but preparation under certain circumstances hides a good deal more from sight than it prevents from coming into being. The new year had almost arrived before Inez returned to New York from Europe and over another month had elapsed before she joined her family in Washington. And this was the first time since the day of his memorable battle and victory in the House that they had met. Those threads, invisible to others, that love transforms into impassable barriers, held them apart. He knew she had returned and held that he should have heard from her. Her

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reasoning steered in an opposite direction, and so they might have drifted farther and farther apart had not accident, on which love relies as impartial arbiter, brought them together again.

On this straw they waged quarrel greatly for a while. She believed herself neglected; he insisted that he had been ignored. Inwardly he rejoiced not to find her indifferent. For her, in an environment fast growing monotonous, he struck a highly accentuated note of difference that fell on a grateful ear. Here was the same social kaleidoscope through which she had been looking until her eyes were tired of seeing the same varicolored glasses in it form but slightly different combinations, and here was a man who stood on the outer edge of it, refusing to adjust himself into its color schemes, and who, for that very reason, stood by himself as an original and therefore an interesting entity. He had proved stronger than Washington, being of it, but standing apart from it with a sort of warm Lincolnian aloofness.

Stirred by a mood she sought an exchange of confidences with him more intimate than seemed in tune with their intrusive surroundings. She led the way, almost as imperceptibly as she might have led a conversation, through the parlor and toward the back of the large Southern house. He followed submissively. They paused for a moment to chat with Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck, and a moment afterwards Bruce avoided collision with the graceful form of Sydney P. Shaw.

For the occasion an addition of floor space had been acquired by throwing open the dining room doors and building a tentlike arrangement around the generous girth of the rear porch. In the large old-fashioned garden below—preserved from a rigorous formality by a seemingly careless arrangement of fountains and rockeries—innumerable red and blue

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miniature electric lights came to life and died out like fireflies amid thick shrubbery. The sudden change in the weather from chilliness to a full spring warmth had permitted this innovation at the last moment, and it had therefore some of the charm of the unpremeditated. One or two of the younger couples even, defiant of rheumatism and other ills, had strolled outside. They could be traced only now and then by the gleam of a masculine cigar or cigarette, the sound of crunched gravel, moving aside with a protest, the light laughter of a woman pleased.

Inez stood on the stairs undecided for a second and then she said: "We will risk it." She threw over her bare shoulder, with defiant carelessness, a light wrap, and they stepped into the garden—a garden up and down whose paths Webster and Clay had passed in their day, whispering what sweet nothings, meditating what fond-laid plans, history luckily never may know.

In front of a clump of lilac bushes she stopped and said: "How warm it is! I fancy that I can smell the lilacs and hear their buds open."

The night was full of the soft musical noises of nature's resurrection. Under one's feet the earth stirred. Overhead the stars laughed in the golden joy of being; and a full moon, cloudcircled as with a cap of white lace, looked down on the world in a solemn, grandmotherly sort of content. To the night there was a certain whiteness, a certain luminous quality, impossible for the colors of mundane palettes to express.

Even Bruce, whose inner life was so intense that he had little eye and small sensitiveness for externals, came under its influence. Inside, one was hedged in by the four walls of a crowded room, one's utterance was choked, but here one's spirit expanded to meet the ever-widening proportions of the

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infinite. One could talk! With her and the rapturous stars for listeners what could he not say? He would grow ecstatically eloquent, carrying away her, the world and himself. And of eloquence aroused, most unerring shaft in Cupid's quiver, let all women beware!

"Perfect!" she said and became silent. Her mind traveled to France in August when the moonlight poured on the white clover fields, swimming in fragrance, dazzling white as with winter snow; a land soft as Cazin had limned it.

She leaned on his arm. Her presence, mingling with his, thrilled him. Intruding cigar and cigarette disappeared; they had the garden to themselves. There was about her, clad all in white as she was, a luminousness, an emanating radiance as from the white night itself. A mad impulse, suggested as by another self, seized him to drop at her feet and sob out his love as the universe was proclaiming its passion for the white night, and the night was proclaiming it for the universe. He felt her complete mastery over him, knew his complete surrender, and he trembled with a delicious, unnamable sensation that robbed him of his voice.

"It was cruel of you not to have let me hear from you for so long," he choked out at length. Behold his eloquence reduced to a poverty-stricken phrase!

"And of you!" she answered, turning her beautiful face, moonlit, full on him.

He thought a second. "But I didn't know."

She answered quickly, "Nor I." The tortuous pathway brought them before a bench, shielded by the rockery. She sat down murmuring, "How beautiful it all is!"

"Very," he answered. Between her last two sentences he felt that the whole world had slipped his grasp. He bent his head, bewildered by his emotions, his rush of tangled thought, her presence, the munificent night. She leaned

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nearer him. His dark face turned white with passion. She could hear his labored breath; her own heart beat quicker. "I love you," lips within his lips were saying, when there was the disconcerting crunch of gravel on the walk, the patter of an inconsequent conversation, and they arose. The garden had been taken away from them. The commonplace had exercised its right of eminent domain. A moment later both thought they recognized Georgia and Fiske in those barely audible voices, in those indistinct forms, but, quite taken up with themselves, neither passed any comment. She renewed her congratulations on his elevation to the senatorship.

"If it pleases you it gratifies me," he said.

She remained thoughtful a second but answered him nothing.

"And your Child-Labor bill?" she asked. "I have carried it around in my subconsciousness all night. I meant to ask about it earlier."

He told her how pettifogging, how the shifts and tricks of Senate procedure had thrust it aside every time he arose to bring it before the consideration of that august body. He explained the ruses by which it was done so adroitly that even the visitors in the gallery might have thought that those who were attacking his bill from ambush were friendly to it, how even the readers of the congressional proceedings in the *Record* might have discovered no word of enmity on the part of those who were attacking the bill from behind their impregnable fortress of subterfuge and chicanery.

The pressure of her hand on his arm, light, transitory as it was, expressed her sympathy. "In spite of their efforts to bury it, however, one hears much talk about it. One reads much of it. And public opinion, you say, is a great force in these matters."

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"If it is persistent enough. Then after the Senate comes the Supreme Court. I fear it equally."

"With good cause perhaps."

"Doubtlessly," he replied, looking at her intently, "but why do you say so?"

She was silent. He repeated the question.

"I thought I wouldn't tell you, but since you wish to know—" she hesitated, waited for his encouragement and, receiving it, went on. "I dined at the Blackmaurs' the other night. Justice Addams was among the guests. I don't remember just how the subject of your bill came up, but come up it did—I think it was brought about by one of the senator's questions—but at any rate I heard Justice Addams say: 'I don't think the Supreme Court will countenance it. We are trespassing too violently on individual rights in this country. The parents ought to decide whether their children are to work or not. Those may not be the precise words but they are reasonably exact. We must go in now,' she ended with sudden irrelevance. "We have been out here too long. We may have been missed inside."

Bruce nodded. On the stairs he turned to look at the garden seat occupied, he thought, by Georgia and Shaw now. It was singular that the disconcerting news she had brought him did so little harm to his tranquillity. His imagination carried him back to that bench, held him there for many long nights to come.

CHAPTER II

GEORGIA'S SCHEME

THAT was Miss Hammersmith and McAllister who went into the house then, was it not?" asked Shaw of Georgia, as he leaned far back in the garden seat to gain, as it were, a firmer hold on the elusive beauty of the night.

"Yes, I think so. How wonderful it is for April."

He nodded. "They are engaged, I hear."

"It is hard to tell, Sydney; one hears one rumor one day, another the next. She is a peculiar girl."

"In what way?"

"Such an odd mixture of cold and warmth. I have never met anybody quite like her."

"Peculiar, I should say, for falling in love with a man as ugly and uncouth as McAllister."

"That may be just the charm, Sydney. I see a falling star!" She pointed upward.

"McAllister!" he laughed softly.

They were quiet a while, listening as Inez and Bruce had before them, to the voices of the night. She spoke abruptly:

"Sydney, do you know I think you're foolish." The moonlight falling on that firm hand toying with a fan, showed her nervous, as if she were venturing on something more perilous than the lightness of her tones divulged.

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"The discovery is as sudden as it is radical. What led you to it?" He spoke half bantering, half sarcastically.

"A remark of my father's the other night."

"Out with it, Georgia."

"The Senate Committee on Public Lands, I understand, is considering a bill to dispose of something like forty million acres of coal and oil land."

"For a woman, Georgia, your aptitude for figures is remarkable."

"Thank you. The bill, too, was introduced by you. It has the honor, they say, of bearing your name. The Shaw Coal and Oil Land bill they call it."

"I cannot deny the relationship though I would. And then?"

Before she answers him we would say, which their conversation does not, that Shaw, after losing the nomination for the presidency and secretly helping to defeat Fiske, bobbed up serenely in the United States Senate to fill the last two years of the term of the junior senator from Vermont who had died before he could perform that duty for himself.

"And then," she went on, "if the bill passes, Anthony Wyckoff will get all those acres for a mere song."

"Who told you this?"

"My logic."

"Against a woman's logic a man's reasoning is powerless. Go on, Georgia. Tell me where my folly comes in?"

"In not keeping those forty millions of acres for yourself. You know what poverty means in this world. You at least can never be President and be poor. With wealth you can control conventions, without it you are Sir Anthony's puppet. I see him dangle you, making you perform antics to suit his every whim."

Georgia, understanding that to hope for the day when her

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father should enter the White House was to squander the very substance of which hope is made, had resolved during the next four years to place Shaw on the nation's altar and make it take him for its idol.

"I don't like to dance either, Georgia," he went on wondering at what she was driving, "especially this string and wire dance. But perhaps in your wisdom you can tell me how I can unfasten myself. Cheap as the Government, by virtue of the bill, may dispose of those lands, still it will take an enormous fortune to purchase them, another enormous fortune to develop them. A senator's salary and perquisites are scarcely equal to it. Perhaps you can tell me though, sorceress, how one may perform that miracle in finance!"

"I am surprised at your density, Sydney."

"Let me wonder at your brilliancy, Georgia!"

"There is Wall Street."

"It was before us and will be after our departure." He looked searchingly into her large face and the strong features, softened by the gracious moonlight.

"If it is always there it offers a permanent opportunity. Grasp it! Organize your land company there secretly, and until it is organized and ready to take control of the lands keep your bill in the committee."

"But if Anthony hears of this!" He whistled.

"I laid emphasis on the word secretly."

"You have a wonderful mind, Georgia. You ought to have been a man—ought to have been, that is, if it wouldn't have robbed the world of such a magnificent woman. We surely ought to name our company after you."

"Well for you," she laughed, pleased by his double compliment, "that your adroitness slipped in a saving clause. As for naming the enterprise after me, I would rather have

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the honor of naming it. Trite as it is, the word *Excelsior* has always appealed to me. I said it when the star fell."

"*Excelsior* then! Under that banner do we march! Let us not forget obstacles, however! Remember that McAllister and your father serve on the same committee. You recognize a double danger?"

Again we interrupt. When Fiske was defeated and the incumbent of the presidency was nominated to succeed himself, the great man retreated during the campaign like a sulky Achilles into his tent and would do nothing at all. He threatened to retire from politics and devote himself to the law once more, knowing that if he returned to Congress he would not be reelected Speaker. But Fiske's State held the man at his own sterling worth even if the country at large did not, and with no effort on his own part he was sent to the Senate. So it came about, the whim of destiny wishing it, that Bruce, Fiske and Shaw took their places together with ten other senators on the Committee of Public Lands. Enmity and friendship alike would seem to draw tightening bands around the world.

"I know our dangers," resumed Georgia, "but one can hardly hope to play for stakes so enormously large and run no chance. Since I am ready to take them, why should you hesitate?"

"You are best and wisest among women!" he said enthusiastically, after thinking around all the edges of her scheme quickly and searchingly.

"But I am not altogether unselfish in this. If successful, I should claim my share of the reward."

"Which is?"

"You know, Sydney." The hand that held the fan trembled visibly.

"Our marriage?"

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She nodded. "You have always told me that when your finances were in shape and you found yourself settled in life——"

"Nothing in the world would make me happier than to make you happy," he interrupted.

Looking into her blue eyes, in that face of intellect and power, modeled to the most feminine of contours by the moonlight, he saw no reason why he should ever live to regret or wish to take back these words.

Her lips rested on his lightly as suddenly. They arose and entered the embassy.

CHAPTER III

A DAY WITH SENATOR MCALLISTER

BRUCE McALLISTER hastened through the basement of the Capitol to the Senate room of the Committee of Public Lands. A meeting had been called for ten and Bruce, delayed by some business to which he had been attending in one of the departments for a constituent, was anxious to be no later than he could avoid.

On this morning there would come up for discussion a bill introduced by Senator Sydney P. Shaw for the lease in perpetuity of something like forty million acres of public land, most of it rich in coal or opulent in oil. In the mind of Bruce McAllister, who had given the subject close thought, there was no doubt at all that the whole affair was being manipulated for the benefit of Sir Anthony Wyckoff.

He saw Anthony's Napoleonic shadow fall athwart Shaw's Coal and Oil Land bill. His common sense raised small question that if the bill was reported out of committee and passed both the Senate and the House, Anthony would sweep the vast territory into his insatiable coffers at a price so ridiculously inadequate that even that acquisitive stronghold wouldn't object to a few millions passing beyond its gates, especially when they were expected to return and bring back so many more millions with them.

Bruce had expected that during this meeting of the committee, Shaw's bill for the lease of the coal and oil lands

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would come up for a lengthy discussion and perhaps for a vote, but much to his surprise it passed with a bare mention again, and was postponed for a future consideration. The delay puzzled him. He suspected the enemy's subtle hand working by invisible means. The Fabian policy, pursued so long, baffled him. At eleven o'clock Bruce left the committee room of Public Lands and old Stoutenbury, its chairman, fast asleep in his chair at the head of the mahogany table, and he hurried through those endless lengths of corridors, their yellow walls decorated with formal arabesque of conventional birds piping no ditties to measured vine and patterned flower. Finally he reached his own room in the sub-basement of the Capitol. The Arlington experimental farm needed additional accommodations, and therefore a committee had been appointed to fit the farm to the accommodations, and since democracy could do no harm here, being at home in rural retreats, Bruce was made its chairman. At the disposal of sacred simplicity senatorial courtesy put a room that was wedged in between the janitor's den on the one side and the coal bins on the other. Diogenes, deprived of his tub, could ask for no less!

Here after all, Bruce had reflected as he passed through those interminable corridors, where committee room opened on committee room, was the ponderous gigantic machinery that turned the wheel of governmental legislation, destroying, throwing into dark corners as into a dust and refuse heap, what was favorable to his people—whence came the power of the complicated mechanism—and what at the same time was inimical to the great god of commerce for whom this ponderous complicated mechanism was run.

At exactly twenty minutes to twelve Bruce emerged from his room where he had been dictating letters to his secretary, plowed his way through that labyrinth of corridors again

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and up the bronze stairway, reserved for the senatorial footstep, that ascended to the main floor.

Bruce walked through the cloak room to his seat in the last row of the Democratic side of the Senate chamber, dignified and solidly impressive enough to serve the gods in council. At a few minutes to twelve, their hands in their pockets, in strolled the gods themselves, chatting as they moved over the affairs of Olympus and the deeds of puny mortals, crawling like ants on the mundane sphere far, far below. Each particular divinity found his desk in one of the concentric rows that circle about the wide dais where Jove himself, wielding a presidential gavel, sat enthroned.

Once in their desks the senators, who have certain dimensions and attributes in common with mortals, busied themselves with their private correspondence, deaf to the clamor of the clerk droning on and on through a list, high as Olympus itself, of pensions, memorials, petitions, reports, bills—all that vast river of legislation—presto! our mountain is turned into water!—that flows on silently and without interruption into the limitless sea made by the outpouring that has gone before it.

A bill to encourage the destruction of Canadian thistles was up for debate, having been given the right of way by the Steering Committee, and as unfinished business it would command the floor of each afternoon session until it was supplanted by another measure. Therefore, the McAllister Child-Labor bill could only be indulged in the morning hour and after the consideration of what is known as the morning's business.

When the moment came around Bruce arose in his seat to call up his bill; whereupon a senator from Massachusetts, who ran most of the woolen mills of his own State and

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various cotton mills in the South, arose to ask if the McAllister Child-Labor bill had been read; and thereafter a senator from New York, who was a greater banker than a legislator, bobbed up to remark that he hoped if the bill was taken up, it would be read at length; and immediately afterwards a senator from Virginia, who owned enough coal to keep the whole world at fever heat, requested that the bill be read for information, which provoked from Bruce the statement that he had not asked for a unanimous consent to call up the bill, which in turn brought a protest from the senator of Arkansas, who told the South what to do with its politics and its cotton, and it did it, that unanimous consent was certainly necessary, which lofty and weighty opinion found a second in the voice of the venerable millionaire senator from Michigan, whose avowed object in life it was to marry labor to capital, and to live to bless the morganatic union, which finally brought forth a ruling from the President of the Senate against Bruce and in favor of the protesting senators, which left nothing else for Bruce to do than to say he would move to proceed to a consideration of the bill on the following Monday.

Bruce recalled bitterly that thus chicanery had bandied about his Income Tax bill, his Anti-Injunction bill, and as he peered around at those venerable, white-bearded faces and divined what was stirring in their world-building minds, a feeling of helplessness, of utter dismay came over him. What did the struggle avail? He was merely wasting his energies, awakening to laughter their cynical indifference. They regarded him probably as a Don Quixote who was hurled into painful notoriety by the protesting sail of the windmill he had attacked.

At four the Senate adjourned and Bruce retreated to his allotted space in the sub-basement to take up his unfinished

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business with his secretary. At dusk Elaine called for him and they left the Capitol to dine in a restaurant near by, and an hour or so later they walked over to the Baltimore and Ohio depot to meet their brother Peter, who was coming on from New York.

Peter McAllister, who has dropped out of these chronicles for so long a time, left for Europe when Bruce was elected to Congress and there he had continued his scientific studies in the universities of France and Germany. Bruce had obtained for him a position in one of the laboratories in the Department of Agriculture and Peter intended to make his future home in Washington.

Tired and dusty from his journey Peter, after greeting his brother and sister warmly, suggested that they at once make for their apartment; but nothing save a moonlight visit to the Capitol on this perfect spring night would satisfy Elaine. Bruce acquiesced with his usual good nature, but Peter yawned, declared Elaine's vagary sentimental and went under protest, loitering behind. He had come to engage in his profession in the capital much like a priest going to an unvisited city to celebrate a mass, the church itself counting for naught, the ceremony for all.

It was Elaine who had nicknamed Peter the priest of science, and the sobriquet was apt in more senses than one. Portly, rotund, although but three inches shorter than Bruce, his fatness had the ecclesiastical cast. A long residence and speculation in the realm of scientific ideas and ideals gave Peter the air of one who dwelt apart in his own world. His head was bald on its broad top and a ring of black hair surrounded it, tonsurelike. He dressed soberly in a worn, black frock coat that flapped below his knees. Peter in a way was to science what Bruce was to politics. Science was his shrine. His was a whole-hearted devotion, a mania that

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would have destroyed him had not his nerves been made of steel.

When the trio surveyed the Capitol from the Senate's terrace, Elaine's imagination was touched by the somberness of that great pile—a colossal shadow thrown against the vaster shadow of the infinite night. Then the sable curtains were tossed aside and the moon rolled forth in all her splendor and the stars drew around her their glittering phalanx.

Elaine, responsive to the change, indulged a happier imagination and let her thoughts populate the fountains, the trees, and the grottoes of the moon-flooded park with vivacious armies of legendary folk. What a place for them to make merry! In her eyes it was as if the witchery of the hour almost seemed to signal each dryad and nymph from her imprisoning tree or shrub, each naiad from the depths of her mossy fountain. It was now the time and place for Titania, clapping her hands lightly, to summon her elfin bands that they might fill the park with their mischievous, laughing voices.

While Elaine's fancies occupied her, Bruce looked outward from his coign as if he were surveying the whole land. The tired Peter asked him with a yawn of what he was thinking. Bruce, ashamed like a virgin in love of the fine emotions that were kindling in his breast, gave no answer.

CHAPTER IV

PETER'S JOB

SIR ANTHONY was growing impatient. Sydney's dilatoriness fretted him. He thought it was high time, public sentiment being quiescent, that the Shaw Coal and Oil Lands bill be reported out of committee. He summoned Sydney before his august presence and lectured him severely, saying that if he didn't move and move quickly he would command those of the majority members of the committee, who were his tried henchmen, to see to it that his will was done.

"Senatorial courtesy," started Sydney.

"I don't care a snap of my fingers about senatorial courtesy," replied Anthony, his little eyes glowing.

"Neither do I," said Sydney, "only, and especially in questions of delay, it is a cast-iron rule that the majority accept the wishes of the chairman of the committee. Even the minority members will refuse, unless an agreement is impossible, to snatch a bill out of the chairman's hands and vote to report it out in spite of his desire."

"And so that doddering old idiot of a Stoutenbury stands between me and those forty millions of rich acres. It's preposterous."

"But it's the truth."

"All this folderoy and circumlocution and mummery ought to be thrown to one side," scolded Anthony. "They

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interfere with business. The country needs a new constitution."

Sydney bowed. "And then it must be remembered that that man McAllister is on the committee, too. He's a ferret!"

"I guess my national university will take care of him. If it doesn't, other things will," said Anthony. "Don't you mind him; go ahead just as if he didn't exist and get your Coal and Oil Lands bill reported out."

Sydney, pouring forth regrets as freely as Anthony's vats poured forth oil, promised that he would hurry, and he kept his word by goading his Wall Street agents, Messrs. Gore and Fry, into greater and greater efforts in behalf of the Excelsior.

Only a few days after this unpleasant interview the national university was founded and put into operation by its board of trustees, made up partly of representatives from the Senate, the House, the Cabinet, scientists from the departments and scholars of national repute. And but a few days after the wheels of this academic machine made their first revolution, Peter McAllister, the sober priest of science, came to Bruce rejoiced beyond measure, ebullient as a master of dances.

Bruce, who sat at one of the side windows of their apartment, gazing out over Arlington Heights and the distant hills that rose, tier on tier, far beyond it, looked up as his brother entered the room, wondering what his elation meant and he asked coolly: "Who's the lady, Peter?"

"It's a bigger thing than a lady," answered Peter somewhat scornfully. "There's been some talk of giving me an original research department in chemistry in the new university."

"That's the new school that Mr. Anthony Wyckoff is

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founding for those who already know nearly everything, to learn all there is, eh? Well, seeing that you are so happy over the prospect, I hope it will turn out to be more than talk. But why are you going to be any better off than you are now? What's put all the rubber into the heels of your sobriety?"

Peter sat down beside Bruce, leaning his square shoulders and his bald head toward him. "You see it's just exactly what I wanted—in fact exactly what I've wanted nearly all my life. I shall have my living assured, and I can quit this irksome routine work and follow a line of original investigation."

"Cut loose from the cart you've been hauling all these years and turn around to browse on what's inside of it, eh?"

"That about expresses it, Bruce." Peter's face grew more serious yet brighter and his eyes opened wide and dreamily; at that moment there was a striking family resemblance between the two brothers, who looked as different as if they had been born of different parents. Peter drew his chair closer. "I've never told you, Bruce—I'm not much of a hand to talk until things are done; but I've been working away night and day for years on a theory of mine. There are times when I don't like to even let myself dare to think of the possibilities of it; but I think—I have good solid reasons for knowing that I am on the brink of one of the greatest discoveries ever made in biological chemistry."

Bruce studied his thumb nail closely as if his whole mind were fastened there, and Peter, despite the stoicism in which he had trained himself, felt hurt at what appeared to be a lack of gladness and sympathy on his brother's part. Surely there is nothing sadder in life than to be compelled to bear what should be the source of a great happiness all alone!

"I'm positive," continued Peter, "that my discovery

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when completed will do more to cure the horrible diseases and ills that now afflict humanity than anything brought to light by the centuries of science. Modern medicine will find it as important and revolutionary—even far more so—than Pasteur's contributions to science. I don't want to bore you with the details of it, Bruce; it's too long and dry for a layman; but you will grasp my theory when I say that the central idea of it is that the ions of the blood unite chemically to produce electricity instead of heat; in other words, that the combination and recombination of ions in the human system is the source of electricity which, in turn, through its many transformations, evolves all our life-giving energies." He paused.

"I see," said Bruce, "you've got a little patent to do away with doctors and remove sickness automatically." His voice, the eagerness of expression on his face, proved the interest and the emotion that his words denied.

Peter shook his big head, impatient of interruption, and, bringing his finger tips together, he clapped his hands slightly as he ejaculated: "Now, when certain chemicals are absent in the blood the ions fail to give this electricity, and you have an impoverishment of the system, a weakness of the nerves and the diseases consequent upon it. I hope to supply the chemicals artificially by the injection of salts and serums; and I believe that the cure of consumption, insanity, of the scourges of existence that have baffled science for so long are in my hands."

"And you've carried ideas like that around with you in silence all these years? It's a wonder the pressure didn't blow the top of your head off! But I always expected big things of you, Peter," he added gravely, "and the fact is that I've been disappointed not to have heard of them sooner."

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"What was the use of telling anybody," groaned Peter. "My theories are just in that state where if I announce them I'll be laughed at as a charlatan or denounced as a sensational advertiser, whereas if I have money and leisure enough to continue my investigations I'll be accepted as a discoverer and a scientist."

"So you have been floating between sky and dry land until this offer from the national university comes along, settles your difficulty and drops you where you want to go?"

"Yes, it does, Bruce." He arose and, standing at the window, looked out on the white Doric front of Arlington House, which under the softening influence of the dusk took on the nobler aspect of the Grecian temple after which it was modeled. Did it symbolize to him the new temple of science whose portals he yearned to enter as high priest to dedicate it to humanity?

"Wasn't there a string tied to that offer, Peter?" There was just a slight throb of pathos in Bruce's voice, as if, despite his efforts at the humorous, pathos had gradually been gaining an upper hand over him.

Peter turned, as if shocked by his brother's question and his changed tone, as if he had seen the pillars of Arlington House totter and tumble. "What do you mean, Bruce?"

"I suppose you think your brother is an awful skeptic, Peter; but I believe if a man is hungry and penniless and he stumbles on a pocketbook in the street suddenly, he wants to look around carefully and see if there's a string tied to it before he stoops to pick it up—likely as not there's a bad boy behind the fence."

"You're speaking in riddles, Bruce," he said anxiously.

"Well, Peter," explained Bruce, pulling his long right leg around his left and twisting the right foot around the left ankle, "that new prospective job of yours is a lure

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they've put out to catch me. I have only to behave myself according to their standards of behavior, never pull on the bills they shove and never shove on the bills they pull, and you're to have the job that your heart is set on. Anthony Wyckoff and his interests are the bad boys behind the fence; do you see?"

Peter turned his face and looked out of the window again, saying nothing in reply. Bruce arose and put his big hand on his brother's shoulder affectionately: "It's a pretty hard position they've shoved me into, isn't it? I know just how you feel about it, Peter; you needn't tell me—you're a McAllister."

"It isn't altogether for myself, Bruce; I don't want to be either hypocritical or vainglorious, but I'm perfectly willing to give up my life—what does a man without wife or family need to care about that?—to relieve the suffering and wretchedness of humanity."

"You're a McAllister and I understand that, too, Peter; and it makes it just that much harder for me to bear."

"But the changes you want, the principles you are trying to establish are bound to come anyway; I've heard you say a dozen times that the change is as inevitable as the coming of spring after winter—it's in the evolution of things." He was silent as if he wished to say more, but as if his own conscience would not allow him to influence his brother's.

"And with your discovery it's different, I know. It may be lost forever or held back all the way from twenty years to a century, and in the meantime you see people that you could save suffer, go insane, and die in torture."

Peter's big bald head nodded hopefully as if Bruce's unaided grasping of his own point of view would lead him to the sure acceptance of it. "But, Peter, I guess the same principle is at the bottom of both our problems. It boils

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down to a question of conscience, and both of us are McAlisters—I can't help that and I don't believe you want to. Supposing we change shoes, and some one should come to you and say: 'Here, we'll put that long brother of yours into the Cabinet or the Supreme Court if you will just keep quiet and stop denouncing our scientific methods for shams and lies, and if you'll admit—you'll only have to keep still to do it—that you have been mistaken.' Would you do it, Peter?"

"I don't think that I would, Bruce," came the slow reply. Bruce felt Peter's burly body quiver, as with suppressed emotion, and he knew what those few words had cost; or it may have been that only Bruce's hand trembled and that he translated his own feelings into his brother's.

The darkness closed in quickly on the dusk; the sun's glowing red ball, sinking swiftly behind the Virginian hills, lost color and died out. Bruce arose and walked over to a front window, giving on the south. As the darkness grew blacker and blacker the white lines of the Monument stood out clearer and sharper, as if, too, like the moon and the stars, it had been waiting in patience for the night to come and give it life. The old dreamy look passed over his face, and he broke the deep silence with:

"Quite a bit of stone over there, Peter; you'd better come and have a peep at it."

CHAPTER V

THE CAT SCRATCHES AT THE BAG

IT was the boast of the argus-eyed Edward Donovan Butler that he never traveled anywhere without learning something—the pity was that his travels were circumscribed. The vaunt, to give it significance by attachment, was made on his return from Chicago, when he went to Bruce, as Achates to his Æneas, with the information, given him by a Chicago attorney, that a gigantic deal in Western land was being underwritten by a big New York law firm.

Thereupon the argus-eyed Butler flew to New York, and one eye following one trail and another scouring a by-way of its own selection—there was at least one path for every eye—he soon discovered that Messrs. Gore and Fry were organizing a company to develop the resources of that vast Western territory as soon as it should pass out of the Government's control. It will be seen that the farther Butler traveled the more he learned.

"It hardly seems probable to me," said Bruce, discussing the deal with Butler, "that Anthony himself would go about floating the thing in quite that way. I suspect competing interests at work. The whole affair has baffled me since the beginning. It would seem to Anthony's interest to have had the Shaw bill reported out long ago, and yet it sticks there in committee."

"Of course you know Shaw could have the bill reported out if he wished. He controls old Stoutenbury. He owns

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him. The old fellow is under the thumb of his beautiful young wife, who used to work in the Census Bureau, and they say Shaw fixed up the match.

Bruce nodded. "Yes, I know."

"Do you suspect Shaw's hand in it anywhere?"

"I'm willing enough to, Ed, but I can't see why I should. His interests must be Anthony's. There is no reason in the world why they should be opposed."

"None that we can see."

"Nor reason out, either." Bruce reflected deeply, the foot of his right leg clamped around his left ankle. "I tell you, Ed," he spoke suddenly, his swarthy face lighting up, "we might get an inkling of what's in the air by letting Wyckoff know that you have learned about the organization of his new company. If he's in it, and knows about it, then there's no harm done. If he doesn't know about it he might ask questions of us that would let the cat out of the bag."

Holy High Jinks, Butler's divinity, gave enthusiastic sanction to the idea. "But who's to go to Anthony?" he asked, his calmer thought weighing difficulties. "Clearly you can't. I can't either; the very terms under which the story was given me make it impossible. In a way I'm under oath. If we send anybody else, and the story breaks, it's all over with us."

Bruce's foot sought his ankle. "I'll find somebody."

"Whom?"

"Somebody."

Butler knew that Bruce's nothings and his somebodys were as insurmountable as stone walls, and having had his forlorn experiences in attempting to scale them he let the matter drop.

Our own abilities for ascension being bounded only by

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the skies, we are enabled to look over Bruce's as over all other walls and to tell the inquisitive that the person whom he intended to honor with the carrying of that veiled message to Sir Anthony was Miss Inez Hammersmith. His choice did credit to his astuteness. Every namable circumstance favored the accomplishment of that task. To him only one slight obstacle presented itself, slight but still of moment enough to block the undertaking—would she accept that mission?

Here was another situation to test the mettle of eloquence. It had failed him once, but the fault had been his own; this time it would stand, as it were, on its own intrinsic merit, and if it fell short of opportunity again he would number it among the shattered illusions.

The trial came in the Hammersmith library a day later. Here it was, the drum beats of his heart arousing martial courage, he eagerly challenged the issue. Awaiting her he gazed around the dignified room, all hung with dark-red velvet, the woodwork of its high cases and furniture restrained and self-contained in hue. Here might the sages, whose life-work was told in the volumes upon those shelves, be content to pass their immortality, brooding somberly in undisturbed quiescence as in an eternal twilight of time.

Inez entered laughing. The room lightened as if the gold of its trimmings had been scattered with a more unreckoning hand, and the sages retreated, scowling, before youth wisely heedless of any problems but its own.

"I came for a favor," spoke Eloquence baldly, stripped of verbal ornament.

"The wherefore matters but little; you are here," she said. And then half archly, after her fashion, before he could gain advantage from her graciousness, she went on, "Is it Child Labor again?"

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"No," he returned.

"Then it may wait, may it not? Meanwhile, tell me what new fortunes our bill has met."

"Well, the moment they passed the bill to encourage the destruction of Canadian thistles I moved that the Senate proceed with a consideration of our Anti-Child Labor bill, but they executed a contretemps by forcing an executive session."

"But with your path cleared of thistles——"

"And made worse by the introduction of another bill to refuse the use of the mails for transporting insect pests!"

"The insects will disappear like the weeds."

"To give way to something worse?" he asked.

"You have fought too long and valiantly to lose heart."

"I am far from it." He peered into the dense green of the rug as if he were gazing into the translucent waters of the sea. "Another bill is making big drains on my time and sympathy now."

"What bill?" Curiosity, standing on tiptoe, its hand rounded over its ear, was wondering whither he tended.

"That Shaw Coal and Oil Lands bill. Have you heard of it?"

"Only remotely."

He outlined it, summarizing the parts that he thought Shaw and Anthony were playing in it. He himself wished to preserve the territory for the United States. Give the Government possession in perpetuity of the land, and here was an estate sacred to the rights of his people on which monopoly never could trespass. Here were forty millions of Government acres that would exist as a threat to greed, ready to encroach on its privilege and destroy them if necessary. These acres might form the open road by which his people might advance to take possessions away from

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Government and form the Coöperative Commonwealth. These forty millions of acres would lend themselves, so to say, for the posting of signs to instruct the citizens of the morrow.

Invisible were the cords that for her bound him to his cause, his cause to him; and equally slight, working with a like subtlety, was the same cord that acted as a dividing line between the two—a barrier easily and often passed.

Her eager questions proved her warm interest.

"And now we discover that a rival company is being organized in New York to purchase and develop this land," came his answer to one of them.

"And that leads you to believe?"

"I don't know what to believe. I am entirely in the dark."

Her sympathies fluttered dovelike to him. "And the favor for which you come to me?"

"Light!"

"Your answer," she said, her face softened, "puts me where you were, in the dark. Need I say what I would do to help you if it lay in my power?"

"I had thought," he explained half reluctantly, "of sounding Sir Anthony in an indirect way. If he happened to know of this other company our ignorance would be none the less dense; if he himself is in ignorance his own questions may give us the clew to the knowledge we seek."

Her face was thoughtful. "And you wish me to be the direct plummet that is to sound those waters for you?"

He nodded, leaning nearer toward her, his gray-blue eyes fastened piercingly on her.

She pondered again. "I will do it," she said slowly.

And behind those words he thought he heard the welling echoes cry, "I would do anything for you." His spirit

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rushed toward her. He felt she would deny him nothing now. His ardent love pleaded for utterance.

At that moment Mrs. Hammersmith, silver-haired, beautiful as in youth, stepped through the half-opened door. Inez saw the lengthening shadows cross his swarthy face and, guessing what substantial presence had cast them, her own heart trembled.

CHAPTER VI

THE ARMS OF THE ENEMY

SHALL Bruce McAllister be accused of consistently voting with the radicals and persistently dining with the conservatives? If so, shall we visit upon him the pangs of indigestion or shall we deprive him of his franchise? The double chastisement might better fit his perfidy! For woe to him who barter his principles for his dinner, which every man, wisely not quarreling with his bread and butter, does almost as often as he seats himself at the table.

We mention this subject merely because when Bruce McAllister and his sister Elaine, guests at the dinner of the Hammersmiths, stepped into the great drawing-room, prodigal as the renaissance of massive splendors, he let his curious mind weigh for a second the cunning corruption wrought by social bribery. It was as potent, as tireless, here in Washington, lifting the gifted out of the class whence they come to the circle above, changing, as it lifted, their sympathy for the class they left behind for the ideals of the resplendent circle in which they are permitted to enter.

But let the warm-hearted, healthy Addison drive such morbid vapors out of the eccentric brain of our hero! Were the whole world as hearty and hale as Addison into what an unlocked inn would it be converted! Against his pinkness, his blondness, and his rotundity, Bruce appeared as

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lean, lank, and swarthy as ever. Time has intensified, not softened, the differences. Addison has changed in nothing save in his attitude toward politics, for which he has fast been acquiring a relish bred of success, for his is the seat in Congress left vacant by Bruce. The congressman is dead or moved to the Senate—long live the congressman!

Addison introduces Ruth Wyckoff, daughter of Sir Anthony, who is quite as small as her father in stature, with hair, complexion, and features of a kind that did not find as many admirers as her money. Addison had met this heiress to inexhaustible millions on the Continent, and the young man being human we cannot blame him for talking himself into the belief that it was the power such wealth conferred and not the money itself he wanted. Her constant harping on religion and philanthropy bored her blond lover to death; but her fad might have been women's clubs and lectures, and that was worse. Had such been the case Addison would not have married her for all her money. What Addison wanted, when all was said and done, was the easiest of easiest lives, and Ruth Wyckoff seemed the easiest of all easy means to attain it.

A moment afterwards, for the very first time in his life, Bruce was introduced to Sir Anthony Wyckoff himself, who remarked—let the future historian note the gravity and importance of it:

"I'm very pleased, indeed, to meet you. I've wanted that honor for a long time," and then he went on in his deep rich voice to declare that he admired our hero's democracy immensely. He was a democrat among democrats himself, and he lamented the fact that people didn't know it. They would discover the fact later on—when he cornered the earth and allowed them to live on it. Than this no man has greater love for his fellows!

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But lest in time to come it be recorded in musty annals by sociologists, attempting to sow the seeds of class hatred in a country where there are no classes, that wealth alone attended this dinner, we hasten to add that among the others chosen on the occasion to bask in Sir Anthony's golden smiles were Sydney P. Shaw, who had nothing in the world save an ever-growing hope of coming into his due share of those forty millions of acres, and Franklin De Wolfe Fiske, who had even far less.

Inez had protested that the presence of the two enemies so bitter could not help but wreck the success of the affair. But her mother was carried away with the idea that she might achieve a reconciliation, and she smilingly overrode her daughter's objections. Previously Mrs. Hammersmith had been abetted in her project by Sir Anthony Wyckoff, who, for certain reasons of his own, wished these enemies to be made as friends. What could better show that Anthony's heart, like a big percentage of his money, was in the right place?

Aristocracy—the dinner like ourselves is without class prejudice—is represented in the imposing monocle of the Polish minister and the haughty lorgnette of his wife; who shall face either of them unafraid? Of the law it shall be said that it was no more absent now than in many another crisis of the nation. Its majesty was upheld by Justice Addams and his wife, of whom the justice stood in more dread, so they say, than all the rest of the nation of the justice.

Bruce, anxious to take the justice's intellectual measure, had just finished talking with him when Inez strode forward with Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck. Light words passed between them, shot forth and back as shuttles in the loom, when Georgia dropped her point-lace handkerchief, and

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Bruce stooped to pick it up in so awkward a manner that she could not restrain her lips from pursing into a smile.

"What an odd and delightful fragrance," commented Inez, as if to shield Bruce's embarrassment with a phrase. She was willing he should be laughed at, provided only that she was the one who laughed.

"I noticed it," said he, still inhaling the faint delicate aroma, flowerlike, as of rose leaves crushed.

"Both of you," laughed Georgia, "have cultivated and cultured noses. It's attar of roses from the precious bottle that the Persian minister sent to me."

Thus they chatted on, turning nothing into the rivulets of conversation, the river of conversation itself toward nothing, when dinner was announced and the guests, according deference to precedent, passed into the dining room as the order of their importance made place for them in the procession.

The dinner over—it was one of those interminable affairs that attest, before they reach a surfeited end, to the infinite resources of the modern cuisine and the endless straits of modern wits—the guests left the dining room as they had entered it; and the only difference to mark their exit from their entrance was that they looked more bored on going out than when they had come in. Certainly the fault was not the chef's!

Anthony's daughter had fallen to Bruce's lot by that inevitable social law that joins us, in the spirit of marriage, to the person to whom we are least suited, and he was glad when the proper signal permitted him to escape from her table talk, confined to the elevation of the soul of the black folk, and fly to his cigar and coffee, which would be interested solely, he hoped, in soothing the vexed digestion of one overfed white.

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But just before that so-wished-for moment, when he was making his bow in the drawing-room, Inez hailed him and she half said, half whispered, leaning over a book of photographic views:

"I broached the subject of the company to Mr. Wyckoff. If he wasn't aware of its existence, if it took him by surprise, he didn't show it. His eyes twinkled a little brighter for a second and that was all. It may have been that I imagined it!"

"Did he ask any questions?"

"Not one. He changed the subject at once."

"O wise Sir Anthony!"

"But that isn't all. My father went to New York last week and he invested in the company."

"I might be able to tell much if I knew who solicited the investment."

"Senator Shaw recommended it, I know."

"Hm! But after all that tells nothing. Shaw might have been merely acting as Sir Anthony's agent."

"We are no nearer, then?"

He shook his head. Her face fell. The intrigue had stirred her pulses; it had given her a hand in affairs of moment and accentuated her importance in the world.

"Other avenues may open," she said to encourage herself as well as him. "Meanwhile I may need your assistance."

"And why?"

"On account of my father's investment. I believe it has been heavy."

She might count on him, he assured her before retreating, as the mariner on the northern star, unfellowed for constancy in the firmament. When he stepped in the library, and lit at last a reflective cigar, Anthony came and sat

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himself down beside him on the brocaded seat that ran along the foot of the stained-glass window. Sir Anthony began with a reference to the subject of nicotine first, noting the black cigar between Bruce's teeth. He didn't indulge himself, still he nourished no objection to the weed; in fact, he even found a certain comfort in its fragrance. He told a story or two about the use of chewing tobacco in the pioneer days of the West, joining in Bruce's laughter with his own hearty bass, and then before it died away he gradually led the subject up to the Shaw Coal and Oil bill, and said:

"It seems to me a pity that the resources of that vast Western country should lie undeveloped. It would mean work for thousands and thousands and add to the wealth of the country."

Bruce, wondering where Sir Anthony was tending, agreed with the statement, only he added in reserve: "It appears to me to make all the difference in the world just how that section of country is developed."

"Certainly," posited Sir Anthony, his shrewd little eyes trying to find more in Bruce's face than his words discovered. "It seems to me that the Shaw bill is most excellent in some respects, although it has pronounced shortcomings in others."

Between Anthony's Scylla and Charbydis a whole ocean of ships, not alone our lean and lank hero might slip; so easy was the escape that, robbing adventure of excitement, it made the emprise scarcely worth the while. "I am inclined to agree with you," said Bruce. "But it would seem to me that its faults are more pronounced than its virtues." He was trying to entice Anthony's ship into the narrows, wreck it, so to say, that he might learn the nature of the cargo.

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But during the commercial Odyssey the wily Ulysses had learned to beware of dangers he once had escaped; and his ship turned, making for the open seas of conversation, leaving our hero with no more knowledge concerning the course mapped out on its charts than when he had first hailed it.

The watchful Bruce, letting his observing glances wander around the room, met an inquiring glance of Sydney, who was quite as anxious as Bruce himself to know whether Anthony had any suspicions as to the existence of the great reefs and shoals that lay in his course.

It might have been quite as fortunate for Sydney in one way as it was unfortunate for Bruce in another that he did not know what thoughts were whirling through the dark inner recesses of Anthony's mind. Inez's remarks, dropped as they were by a babbling woman ignorant of business, Shaw's delay in getting the bill reported out, aroused in the financier horrible suspicions. He would bide his time, and, if investigation proved Shaw treacherous, he would pay him out sufficient rope to dangle his political corpse from the beams of his thwarted and disappointed ambition.

A few seconds later the nervous, restless Anthony shifted his position again, and he was holding a low-voiced conference with the Polish ambassador near the shadows of the black velvet draperies. The subject must have been one of more than ordinary importance; for Anthony's crossed eyes gazed anxiously into the Count's heavy Slavonic face looking stoically ahead into space. Bruce sought distraction by trying to imagine the words that passed between the magnate and the minister; but with eagle wing outflying the sparrow, Anthony's boldness let Bruce's fancy sink far, far below.

"If then"—so ended Anthony's long discussion—"your

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minister of finance will divide your territory, regulate your prices on oil, and force your producers to combine with us, I'll do all I can to see to it that the Extradition Treaty goes through the Senate in the shape you suggest."

The Count rubbed his thickly veined hand from his cheek bones to his nose and proceeded, much to Anthony's annoyance—he could see through a stone with a hole in it—to go over the same ground once again; and again Anthony explained and agreed. And so was concluded that momentous bargain by which Cosmopolitan oil was to go abroad to be burned, and Polish political refugees were to be sent home to meet something like the same condign punishment.

Meanwhile, the hours were growing small, and Bruce arose to remind Elaine, deep in Polish sculpture with the Countess Villari, that a new day was well on its way. When they went in search of their wraps the imperial Fiske blocked their path to remark that he was on a still hunt for his daughter and to vent some ironical phrase or other on the elusiveness of women. Fiske, making for his hat and coat, ranged himself beside Elaine, and Bruce moved slowly ahead down the broad Caen stone stairway.

The door, respector of persons first and last, opened gravely to let pass Justice Addams and his wife. The justice paused while his wife gave the final arrangement to her cloak, and a sudden gust of wind, seizing the opportunity, blew aside the curtains in the deep recess of the landing, a step removed from where Bruce stood. The blown drapery gave him a glimpse, shadowlike in the way it fell across his vision and darted away from it—of Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck in Sydney P. Shaw's arms. Even before his senses could raise a question as to the reality of the scene, fearful lest Fiske and Elaine budge another inch, and Fiske's mere seeing of

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the incident give it a tragic emphasis, he remarked in tones unusually loud:

"I'll bet neither of you can touch both banisters with your finger tips like that."

"And he represents one-ninetieth of the dignity of the Senate, too," drawled Fiske's ironical voice.

CHAPTER VII

SERVANTS OF THE REPUBLIC

ROSSITER REMBRANDT DICKINSON quit work on his huge canvas—"The Shut Down," the fourth in the Great American Series of ten—a little earlier than usual, for the day had been a severe drain on his emotions and sympathies. Both Captain Jack Munger and Lieutenant Glenn Dodson had broken the news to him of their immediate departure under Government orders—one to the far West, the other to the far East; and R. R. was heavy of heart and depressed in mood. He strolled out through the Mall and, sitting himself down on a bench, drank in deep breaths of the crisp wintry air, and gazed at the Monument, the clear-cut outlines of which were gradually merging in the clouds and the softer atmosphere of the sunset. It stood there solitary and lonely, resting on the earth, merely resting there and leaving it as if too majestic for aught but the heavens.

"It's like me," reflected R. R., through whose mind a kindred thought was traveling; "it's lonely and alone. Maybe that's why I like it so much. All my friends going, leaving here, and I stand lonely and more lonely. Captain Jack going, Lieutenant Glenn going. And when Captain Jack comes back he's to marry little Miss Weber. Well, I suspected as much before he confided it to me. I ought to fall in love with some woman and marry, too, I suppose.

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But I can't do it; it doesn't seem in me. They bother me, women do; they bore me. My God, how lonely I'm getting! I'm as far off from the rest of the world and its people as if I were on the top of the monument looking down. It may be majestic for a piece of stone, but it's hard on a man; that's what it is—it's hard. But look how nobly the old fellow stands on guard to-day! Upon my word, the monument is alive. Almost as human as if he knew what a companion he is for me. You go home, R. R., and cheer up!"

He arose and hobbled along sadly, his head down, his shoulders shrugged, his long ridge of eyebrow shooting out. "Four of the ten almost done," he murmured, "and no more recognition than if I had never lifted a brush! I don't care a hazelnut, though, if I starve to death. I'll finish the series. I'm right; I know I'm right and I'm going ahead. I can't paint chinee roses and I can't pick chocolate-cream nymphs out of clay with a toothpick; I can't, and what's more, I won't."

He turned to look at the Monument again, his sad thoughts centering around it.

"I can't make life out," he maundered, "it's too much for me. It's tragedy, it's comedy; it's a whirligig that you can't stop long enough to find out what it means. It's a wheel, that's what life is, that keeps turning and turning around until your head gets dizzy from trying to follow its whirl; and the rogues and the rascals are safely sheltered in the hub of it, directing its course to suit themselves, and the sycophants and the parasites manage to find comfortable places on the spokes, and the able and the good and the gentle and the honest are pushed on the rim and crushed to death when it revolves. I'm tired of it; I've had enough of it! I'm willing to cry quits. My God! how I'm wearied of it all!"

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He reached the end of the Mall and he wheeled around to take one last lingering look at the obelisk before going home. The sky, flushed by the setting sun, was still bright with colors, as mixed and various as if selected at haphazard from R. R.'s lusty palette. The darkness came faster and faster, the glowing pinks and scarlets were fading swiftly; the night had come, but the Monument was still discernible, erect, guardant, as if defying all the powers of nature to force it to yield the smallest fraction of an inch.

He drew himself up to his full height, moved his shoulders as far back as they would go and touched his hat. "May I stand thus when my night comes and the darkness falls over me," he whispered, plowing on to his room in the house opposite Franklin Square, trying to solace himself with the reflection that a rubber of whist awaited him, and that his book lay on his table ready to open its covers and spread its usual consolation before him.

He bade his fit of blues good night; it had dogged him up to the doorstep and he would have no more of its depressing company; rudely he shook it. But happiness had not calendared that day and night for its own, and the cards were to remain unfingered and the book unread; for while the artist had been counting on his landlord to cheer up his downcast spirits, Scollard was waiting for R. R. to perform something of a like service for him, and the deluded Rossiter Rembrandt found out soon enough that he had been drawing up one reckoning and his host another. Even the bevy of boarders that gathered twice daily around the Scollard table was by no means up to its standard of light-heartedness and merriment.

Unexpectedly, on that very afternoon, Doc Scollard had been dismissed from his position in the War Department, and his poor hand, trembling with age, lacked the confidence

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to try new doors, and he stood, so to say, shivering in the cold outside, benumbed by despair. The world was black for him. Turn out the gas jet around which a myriad of sand flies swarm at night, and to them the whole universe must seem engulfed in darkness; it is much the same with weak mortals when their little two-penny candle of hope is extinguished.

Doc Scollard, leaning far back in his chair, ate scarcely a morsel and said not a word. His dim eyes, usually vitreous, were red, as if from weeping. Now and then he stroked his imperial and mustache nervously, and ran his hand, curiously marked by reddish spots, through his glossy brown hair that curled back from his forehead and fell on his shoulders in a style that was considered poetic once upon a time. His eccentricity ran to his long hair and stopped short with his habits. His linen was frayed but spotless; his clothes were shabby but clean; his whole attire spoke pathetically of a hard battle against an unrelenting, grinding, humiliating poverty. Fate had been playing with him all his life as the cat played with the mouse—giving him a temporary escape from his misfortunes for the cruel joy of capturing him again to increase his misery. He was not without his share of intellect, taking intellects as they run, but he seemed to have every other ability save the ability of putting his ability to use. He had tried almost every profession known to man, and he contrived to fail lamentably in all of them. He was simply one of those bubbles of chance that the winds of circumstances blow into Washington.

He belonged to that class of government clerks, called "Sundowners," who seek to add to their slender incomes by doing outside work after the short office hours of the departments are over, and even now the sign "Dr. Scol-

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lard " hung from his house front inconspicuously, as if rather ashamed of being there, where it invited the hostile action of all the elements and the friendly regard of no patients. He had had only one case in all the years that he had been in Washington, but as that resulted in a damage suit for malpractice he would have been better off without it. There is something about the persistent hard luck of some men that arouses our humor rather than our pity, for the various incidents of their ill-starred careers accumulate one on the other with the comical regularity of a French farce. When Scollard began to detail his misfortune, for which he had an insuppressible fondness, even R. R., who was just as sympathetic as any man could be, found it hard work to restrain a grin, although angry at himself for the apparent lack of feeling. Scollard, in a word, may be described as the kind of a man whose wife keeps a boarding house.

Mrs. Scollard shot sundry shy glances at her husband from her end of the table, wondering if it was possible that fate could have a new sorrow in store for them, and if its resourcefulness in that direction had not been exhausted long ago. She was still a good-looking, well-preserved woman, despite all the efforts of carking fate to undermine her health and her attractiveness, and she was usually cheerful and sunny, the result of a frivolous temperament rather than a strong will and mind. A few deep wrinkles, a wide patch of gray hair on her black pompadour were all that her buoyancy and youth had surrendered to worry and nagging care. Her talk ran entirely to her ancestry—she came from the old South—and the good times of her youth.

Fanny Scollard, their only daughter, whom Bruce had the pleasure of meeting at the card party given by Ommaney, lacked but a shade or two to turn her blondness into yellow-

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ness. R. R. called her "Miss Polly Peroxide" in jest. With her inheritance of good looks, which was not small, the frivolity of one parent and the weakness of the other had come contingently. She was a stenographer in the Patent Office and, if one were to judge by her clothes and her jewels her income was suspiciously larger than her salary. She explained away this mystery of finance with an ease and glibness that ought to have won the admiration of the Secretary of the Treasury.

Miss Fanny came and went at what hours she pleased, and if her father remonstrated in his mild, timid manner she retorted that she was earning her own living; and her mother usually flew to her aid with the observation, "That the time to enjoy oneself was when one was young!"

Rossiter Rembrandt Dickinson, whose quiet observation nothing escaped, often wondered if the father and mother ever questioned their daughter's method of financing her queenly luxury and her flaunting extravagance; as for himself he entertained no doubts on that score. R. R. had lived with the family for years; he had watched the girl, for whom he had a fondness, grow from girlhood into womanhood; he had followed her course from the high school into the Government office, and the decadence of her character had cost him more than one sharp pang. She liked R. R., too, in her own fashion, and she respected him and feared him more than she did any other being on earth. He was downright honest with her; his friendship was without motive, and she felt his superiority and humbled herself before it. She would have blacked his boots had it contributed to his happiness.

He had had a serious talk with her on one occasion, pointing out, as gently as was in him, how her career must end, and she had burst into tears and said she knew it, that

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she had lain awake more than one night and sobbed herself to sleep over it, and she promised, with God's help, to mend her ways. She did it, not a week thereafter, by throwing over a congressman and taking up with a senator. The member of Congress, wild with jealousy, had her turned out of office; but the senator ripped up the department and had her restored immediately to a better position at a higher salary. There are times when ambition is to be reckoned among the virtues.

Grant Scollard, the only son, was the practical member of the family; he earned twenty dollars a week in the Post Office Department and he spent thirty-five. Women of Fanny's type would have thought him handsome, and Grant himself thought that there was no type of woman who didn't. He was tall, with a good proportion of breadth of chest to length of limb; his blond hair was combed in neat curly layers and his pretty face had as much character as an equal weighty of putty. R. R., whom Grant despised as a vulgar person and a moralist, nicknamed him "Beau Baxter-Street Brummel."

Grant used what brains he had in the devising of two schemes—one for borrowing money and the other for avoiding to pay it back. He borrowed from generous fellow-clerks, who willingly lent him part of their salaries, asking nothing in return but ten per cent interest. He borrowed freely from Fanny, suspecting whence the money came, and Fanny lent him with an equal freedom, suspecting where the money went—to the race track at Benning and the gambling hells just outside of the district line. Vulgar as R. R. was, he had no hesitancy in borrowing from him until he told the profligate, with a grave mien, that it was an insult to take an artist for a banker. He borrowed from his mother, who pinched herself to lend, and he borrowed—

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but suffice to say that he tried to borrow from everybody who would lend.

Grant never worried, for his faith in the ability of the family and the United States Government to support him was unbounded. His extreme reliance on Uncle Sam's good nature all but cost him his freedom once. He and a number of other clerks made a little too free with the Post Office funds, and before they had time to gamble away their ill-gotten gains warrants were sworn out for their arrest and they were landed in jail, cursing the sternness of a master who had so much and raised such a fuss over so little. When Fanny received a hurried line from her brother, setting forth his trouble and beseeching her aid, the poor girl cried her eyes red and went about the house disconsolate, moaning, "To think that my brother should disgrace our old Southern family like that!" Then she calmed down and had a stormy session with her senator in Grant's behalf, and it ended with the hushing up of the scandal, as far as Grant's part in it was concerned, and the restoration of the young scapegrace to office. One sees what an influential member can do for the rest of the family.

Despite these trivial faults of character, Grant was his mother's favorite; for she got it into her silly head that his fine looks kept up the family's aristocratic traditions and that he bore a strong resemblance to Bushrod Washington, from the day of whose birth she dated the Christian era and the rise of her family. Grant himself set little store by his ancestry, and every time that his mother boasted of it, which was nearly at every meal, he jeered: "If they'd left us less blue blood and more yellow coin, I'd go out to see what their graves looked like."

"But blood will tell," was the mother's cheery reply. She considered Grant very witty. "Yes, it keeps on telling

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the same old story over and over again until you get tired of hearing it," was the response.

Besides the Scollard family and Rossiter Rembrandt Dickinson, five clerks roomed in the house and as many more came there for their board, and last but foremost in his own modest estimation was a senator's private secretary—a man with flaming red hair, freckled cheeks, and a humorous cavity in the end of his pointed nose. He was the self-elected oracle on all matters appertaining to Washington society and politics, and although his income from this source was far less than from his secretaryship he enjoyed the work far better.

"There is a great surprise in store for this country—a sensation," began the secretary mysteriously, trying to break the cloud of silence that hung over the dinner table that night. "What is it?" asked the dark-faced, dapper clerk from the State Department. He was always in dread of the things that might happen.

"Oh, nothing!" replied the secretary with portentous vagueness. "All I am willing to say is that there is a great sensation in store for the party in power," and satisfied with the awe awakened by his mysterious givings-out he plunged his fork into a baked potato and refused to say anything further.

"I wish you would tell your senator," piped Miss Courcelle, a plump brunette, whose short fat fingers were covered with rings, "that the girl he winked his eye at yesterday in the elevator of the Post Office building is apt to be out of a job and she wants to meet him."

"I'll do that," said the secretary seriously, as if the demand required grave consideration, "when I catch him in a good humor. He's bothered these days."

"Well, they don't fire me," chimed in Miss Matheson,

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who conformed to Fanny's type in looks and dress, "or I'll make it hot for somebody I know—that's all."

The other clerks, most of whom were employed in the Census Bureau and who had just heard that a large squad was to be laid off, envied Miss Matheson her self-assurance, listened to her in amazement and ate on in depressed silence.

Dinner over, Miss Fanny Scollard and Miss Matheson put on their hats and went out together, and Miss Courcelle retreated with the oracular secretary for her evening's escort.

"Mr. Dickinson," asked Doc Scollard, catching the artist as he was about to leave the room, "may I impose on your good nature for a few minutes, may I request the pleasure of your company in the parlor for that length of time?"

"Certainly," answered Rossiter, foreseeing the black shadows of some dire event.

"Mr. Dickinson," he remarked, slamming the parlor door, "the seriousness of your character separates you at once from the other patrons of my wife's humble board. You are a gentleman and an artist."

"Which is tautological," said R. R. to himself.

Scollard paced up and down the room as if propelled by the emotion which he was trying in vain to control; finally he stopped short and dropping into a chair beside R. R. he put his hand on the other's knee in a confidential sort of a way.

"Well, prepare your mind for the worst; I am out of a job." His excitement had exploded what he had been meaning to take involved and verbose sentences to explain.

R. R. did his best to console the old fellow, exhausting his resourcefulness in an attempt to trump up reasons why one should not take it sadly to heart when one loses a job.

"I might feel worse about it," said Scollard, his hand

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trembling, his voice husky, "if I thought I had been at all amiss in my duties; but I haven't. No, the whole thing has nothing to do with the faults or virtues of my own. It is all due to the action of Senator Sydney P. Shaw, who had me removed to make room for one of greater political influence. He has entirely forgotten my former valuable services to him. That's the way of the world, Mr. Dickinson; when a man's old and useless he is thrown aside like an old shoe."

Scollard drew several sheets of closely written note paper from his pocket and he glanced around the parlor searchingly, not only to emphasize the importance of secrecy but also to show his peculiar regard for the confidant he had chosen. "I am more apt in written than in verbal expression, and I have resolved not to let this occasion pass without telling the senator my opinion of him."

Like many a man of weak character, who shrinks from facing a stronger one, Scollard had lashed his timidity into anger, and taking a quick advantage of his momentary and enforced bravery he had hastened to put down in ink what he feared might ooze from his finger ends if he dared a personal encounter. He was vain of his sudden gust of courage, and he was glad that the signs of it had taken a permanent form for exhibition.

"Senator," he began to read, adjusting his glasses, "I do not flatter myself that the end of this letter will be other than the waste-paper basket or the fire; but it is sometimes well to recall how we humble ones have helped to assist the mighty in their day of small beginnings. But, lest benefits be forgot, let me recall several of the services that may have slipped your mind, now taken up with affairs more momentous.

"No. I—Senator, who other than Albert Galantin Scol-

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lard secured for you the handsome maple tree as well as the honor of planting it on the ground of the State Capitol when the Grand Army of the Republic was there assembled?

"No. II—Senator, when you were lieutenant governor, whom did you intrust with the delivery of the tents and provisions appropriated by our State to the sufferers of the Johnstown flood, and who saw to it that your name received sufficient laudation for this supposititious act of philanthropy from our local and national press?

"No. III—Senator, when you sought your present illustrious position, who was it you intrusted to see certain of our State legislatures with *certain* messages?

"I need not go on mentioning other services, for undoubtedly these already detailed have started a chain of association that will bring up only too quickly what I have failed to expatiate on.

"Now, senator, you say it is due to no fault of your own if you have not at your disposal sufficient patronage to satisfy the clamorous demands of insistent office seekers; but, then let me ask you why you go outside of the borders of your own State to choose strangers who have done nothing for your political fortunes to fill those positions at your command? How, senator, can you explain to your friends at home the fact that you have selected a young, beautiful, and enticing widow from Kentucky for your private secretary? Do you think, when once known, this will increase your popularity among the deserving but unemployed citizens of our mother State?

"Senator, you know that unlike yourself I cannot betray the man, whatever his debt of gratitude to me, from whom I once have accepted favors; therefore, you need have no fear of me if I say to you that when I called at your home, at your own request to assist the said young, beautiful, and

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enticing widow from Kentucky—may your enemies never learn of her existence!—in the distribution of an extraordinarily heavy mail, I found by the merest accident important documents that would spell your political ruin if they had chanced to fall into any other hands but my own. The first of these documents, written in your hand, is self-explanatory. I humbly beseech you for the sake of your own good reputation to take better care of it. The second exhibit, which I hold of no inferior value from a sensational point of view, is a series of newspaper articles that show your connection with the long-forgotten scandal concerning the contracts for the erection of one of our State buildings. The past, it is true, dies, senator, but it is never buried.

“Can it be possible, senator, that the suavity which allows you so easily to explain to your old friends that you have no jobs for them when you fill fat positions with slender, young, beautiful, and enticing widows from Kentucky, will help you to pluck the deadly sting contained in these documents?”

“To relieve you from all apprehension, and to read you through my own humble self a lesson in gratitude, I herewith enclose the aforesaid documents, urging you to destroy them before they fall into the hands of men less scrupulous, honest, and punctilious than he whom you sent to assist the young, beautiful, and enticing widow from Kentucky.”

“Ha! ha!” burst out the old man suddenly, “that will make him squirm, I wager; that’s heaping coals of fire on his head! That will make him regret his perfidy. What do you think of that for a letter, Mr. Dickinson?”

“I think,” advised R. R. gravely, “that it would be the biggest mistake in the world to put that letter in the mails. You will only anger Shaw and you can’t gain anything by the transaction. Besides, I know some people of

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more or less prominence here, and I might prevail on them to find something for you in another department, and there is no good in having Shaw's enmity to blacken your character to start with."

Scollard's woe-begone face darkened, then it brightened again like that of a man who has been cheated by hope so often that he is unwilling to trust in its blandishments again. After all, hope offers the same refuge to mortals that the sands of the desert do to the terror-stricken ostrich; a something wherein to hide our heads when we are utterly routed and afraid to face life. It may be worse than foolish to seek such a flimsy shelter, but it has its comfort for a terrible moment just the same. The luckless Scollard had been taught long ago, by bitter experience, the vanity of that expedient.

"It's always time enough to despair—shove that off to the last moment," piped R. R. as cheerily as he could. "You leave it to me, I'll find you as good a job as you lost or I'll never put brush to canvas again."

"Well," remarked Scollard, with a show of bravery under adversity, "I suppose matters are never so bad that they might not be worse."

"Never, and we're never so badly off that some one is not still worse off, which is meant for consolation to all but the one man in the world who is the worst off of all."

They arose together to leave the room when R. R. stopped to add: "Supposing you give me those incriminating documents. I won't do any harm with them, I promise you, and they might be good batteries to hold in reserve." He thought thus to take from him one of the most besetting of the temptations to send that ill-advised, bombastic brief.

Scollard offered an objection; R. R. argued against it, then they debated his counter argument for a moment, and Scollard yielded as a child to its parent.

CHAPTER VIII

A FALLING OUT

R. R., in strict accordance with his promise to Scollard, paid his second visit to Elaine's studio early the next morning; as on the first occasion, he opened the door without announcing his coming by a preliminary knock. Even before she looked up, an intuitive flash told Elaine who it was. He stood there abashed, hardly knowing how to word the errand on which he had come; it seemed such a wrench of the fitness of things to request a favor of her. She stood in expectation of some more gratuitous criticism of her work, and she stiffened up ready to resent it. She shot a protecting glance through her glasses at her statuettes, just as naturally as a mother's eyes turn toward her children at the first warning of danger. R. R. caught the movement as well as the motive, and he grinned.

"No, I didn't come in about that," he explained, shaking his head solemnly; "its politics in a way—I want you to help me."

"You in politics!"

"You needn't laugh," he broke forth, turning red, "I'm not in it in any but a charitable sense. I want to help somebody."

"I can't imagine your doing that, either."

"I didn't come to squabble. I don't want to squabble," he spluttered. "I want your assistance for a worthy cause. Will you give it to me?"

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"Certainly, you might have asked that in the first place."

His grin changed to a pleasant smile, for he was glad to be taken thus, and without more ado he stated Doc Scollard's plight, asking Elaine to seek her brother's influence in his landlord's behalf. She promised her assistance with more warmth than he had requested it, and after making an appointment to meet her at four o'clock in the library, where she had some work to do, he waddled downstairs to his studio.

He quit work ahead of time that afternoon and waited for Elaine in the lobby of the building, treading up and down restlessly, muttering to himself.

"You seem to be amusing yourself," said she when she joined him.

"Not particularly." He shrugged his shoulders.

"You ought to, amid these splendors of art and marble."

"Splendors of marble, yes and no; the hand of the politician and the loud, vulgar parvenu taste of the Government contractors are here; splendor of art, absolutely no. I hate to come here for some reasons—it is such a blasting sermon on our artistic achievements. Look around you!" he waved his short arm and an expression of disgust crept over his face.

"What don't you like about the paintings?" she asked.

"What do I like about them!" he roared. "They're only fit to adorn a young lady's boudoir, together with her fancywork and her knickknacks and her fans and her toilet articles of sterling silver. They're pretty, they're soft, they're namby-pamby. They're painted with water and thistle-down brushes. There is no feeling in 'em, no life, no red blood! They're weak imitations and anæmic copies of the robust masterpieces of the past. That's a good phrase, that last one!" he interjected.

They moved along through the corridors slowly and he

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poured forth his invective as they went past the various panels. "American art, bah!" he growled; "it all reminds me of the Californian claret that goes over to France and comes back here with a foreign label. My compliments to these daubers"—he doffed his hat burlesquely—"they belong to America's Barber's Own school of painting. One honest American theme, done by a man of blood and iron, would be worth the pack."

"And the Evolution of the Book?" she asked, it must be confessed with something like timidity.

"It's done to order; it's forced; it's trumped up. It's no good. The book was born of agony of the mind, of travail of the soul, of the blood of the heart. It came of a faith that mocked at the tortures of the thumbscrew and the flames of martyrdom. Did your artist feel that? Did he show it?"

He turned toward the ornate marble stairway, and Elaine followed him, curious to hear his scathing criticisms and his vehement manner of delivering them.

"The higher up you go," he commented, "the worse it gets, more allegories, more vapid symbolism and less art. The pictures on the Arts and on War and Peace in these adjoining rooms aren't worth one stone of the stairs up which we came. War is hell, that's what war is—it's carnage; it's slaughter; it's all that's terrible, and these dainty, affected, sentimental paintings give one no more the idea of war than so many lavendered fops in dress coats would do. 'Peace' gives me the horrors worse than 'War'—that jumble of priests, with their votive offerings must have marched out of a convent of the conventionalities. The pictures breathe no calm, no beneficence, no blessed tranquillity."

"There is some justice in what you say," she remarked.

"Some justice! It's all as just as justice itself! Come,

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let us get away from this. It depresses me. I hate it! Let us look at some real art and lift up our souls."

He strutted along hastily, pushed forward by his enthusiasm, all forgetful of her and entered the pavilion devoted to the Hubbard collection of Rembrandt etchings and engravings.

"We've got out of the muck of the alleys and into the temple of art," he said. "I wouldn't give one of those little etchings of Rembrandt's beggars for all the yards of the painting we have seen. One doesn't know what to turn to first here. What character, what ease, what genius in everything that his hand touched. Here's the portrait of the 'Shipbuilder and his Wife'; you can hear them talk if you listen. She's a shrewd, knowing, kindly housewife, isn't she? And he's a busy, absent fellow, hard to take away from his accounts. And those quaint Jewish patriarchs and the blind Tobit! The poetry, the strength, the originality! And the power and the sympathy in those portraits of his mother! And his 'Christ Healing the Sick,' what love and humanity are there in that! What supreme and masterful skill in every detail, in every light and shadow! He's my artist! I wish I could have been with him in his day of adversity, to have waited on him, to have cleaned his brushes, to have run his errands. Just to have seen him, to have heard the sound of his voice would have been worth it all."

"Do you really mean it?" she asked.

"Do I mean it!" he said with a full and quiet emphasis, as he stood lost in admiration for the marvelous composition of the "Ecce Homo," its Christ, sublime and luminous, struggling between divine faith and bodily torment. She imagined that there were tears in R. R.'s eyes.

"I never thought it of you," she murmured.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Rembrandt represents all

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that I worship—sincerity, strength, and love. Who wouldn't grovel in the dust before the incarnation of that trinity?"

"I thought—" She paused. "I have learned many things this afternoon," she said.

He looked at her inquiringly for a moment. His rugged face softened as if one of the master's pictures was before his eyes, then his ridge of brow lengthened and his usual expression came over his countenance as he cautioned:

"It's long after four. We shall have to hurry or we shall miss your brother."

R. R.'s warning had but one fault—it came altogether too late—the Senate had adjourned over an hour ago and Bruce was not to be found in his committee rooms. The artist gave vent to his usual complaint about the loss of time, but, nevertheless, he was quick to urge a call early in the morning of the morrow in order to guard against all danger of missing Bruce a second time.

"I grumble, but I do it anyway," he complained, as he dragged his fat body up the stairs at the hour appointed; "and that's where I'm foolish; either I ought to do it and not grumble, or else I ought to leave it alone. What I need is philosophy."

"Ah, you!" exclaimed Elaine, her white cheeks coloring the least bit, for despite the fact that she had been awaiting him, his entrance came with an unaccountable shock of surprise.

"Ah, me!" he mocked in return, his visage solemn, his ridge of brow projecting. "For once you are glad to see me."

"I? Glad to see you. How do you know?"

"You can fool Rossiter Rembrandt Dickinson about everything else, but you can't fool him about the human countenance—I've painted it too long."

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"Oh, R. R.," she exclaimed impulsively, "did ever a man's words and manner so belie his heart?" Now that she was getting used to the roughness of this singular man, she caught the humorous instead of the irritating angle of it.

"I don't know whether they have or not; and what's more I don't care. Let's make for the Capitol."

She removed her blouse and they hastened to catch their car. "Another morning gone to rack and ruin," he scolded, when he passed the door of his closed studio.

"But I am giving up my morning, too," she objected.

"I know all that," he put in complacently, "but that's different."

"I don't mind your conceit half so much since I have learned your virtues," she laughed.

"It isn't conceit," he pleaded earnestly, "it's knowledge born of faith."

His face was solemn, lit up as with the consciousness of a high and firm purpose. Elaine perceived the fading expression, and she recognized how necessary his conceit was to his faith, his faith to his accomplishments. Yes, she was ready to forgive the egotism that had repulsed her so much at first; she was forming an attachment for this rough, crude, sterling man, with his host of contradictions. Before one understands the finer qualities from which conceit is so often radiated, it is the most difficult of faults to overlook; after this understanding it becomes the easiest.

They found Bruce alone in his room in the sub-basement of the Capitol, looking worn and preoccupied, but a pleasant smile lit up his face the moment his eyes rested on his sister and R. R. While Elaine was telling the purpose of their visit, Rossiter Rembrandt sat by in a glum silence, twirling his slouch hat, scowling murderously. In the narrow, con-

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suming hatred that he entertained for all politicians, it occurred to him that he was debasing himself by seeking a favor, even though for another, from the hands of Senator McAllister, who was of the genus; wondering why he had not thought about that before starting out on his quest.

Bruce listened patiently to Elaine until she had done—R. R. put in but a curt word here and there despite her appealing looks for assistance—and then he remarked that he didn't know but that the children learned to say in the public schools that the three departments of the United States Government were the executive, the administrative and the jobicuary. "I just wrote a fellow last week," he went on, "that the only job I had left was my own, and he had the impudence to write back that he was perfectly willing to humble his pride and take that. I sometimes wish he had." His gray eyes twinkled undecidedly between humor and dreams, and sadness.

Bruce's quips fell flat and met with a dismal failure in so far as R. R. was concerned; he listened with an angry face, his eyes shooting from the floor to Bruce, from Bruce back again to the floor, as if he wished to say something and yet liked not to let himself go.

"You see," Bruce proceeded, "it's a rather delicate piece of business for me to put Scollard right back to work after Shaw has removed him, especially so, since my relations with Senator Shaw are what you might call a little strained. However, I may be able to get the thing done indirectly so that my hand won't show in it. Call up at the house some evening, Mr. Dickinson, and see us."

Bruce's eyes wandered with an unwilling and weary glance toward the papers and documents heaped up before him on the long table.

"Yes, I'll call," said R. R. in a way that showed he in-

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tended to do nothing of the sort. The artist wobbled to the door, fished through his various pockets, and finally drew forth the documents Scollard had abstracted from Shaw's correspondence. "I won't give it to him," he said. "It wouldn't make any difference if I did; these politicians all stand in with one another, anyway."

When they left the basement and passed through the corn-stalk columns at the foot of the East stairway—this Samson of criticism pulled them up root and all—and when they wended their way through the stretches of corridor and down the Capitol stairs, R. R. turned a deaf ear to Elaine's defense of her brother's attitude. He nodded his big shaggy head mechanically and his face grew black—outer signs of the tempest raging within. "They're all like that!" he grumbled to himself, "they'll tell you a funny horse-thief story—that's what I call them, horse-thief stories—and they will laugh while their poor victims eat out their hearts. Those demagogues and thieves! If one of them didn't watch the other they'd tear down the Capitol to sell the marble and old iron. Whenever there's a big theft, it's merely a sign that there has been a truce between them, and a laying down of arms. They stop throttling each other to join hands and throttle the public. Those humorous senators are like the Capitol dome—beautiful and imposing on the outside but a lie and a sham inside, propped up by false scenery and hidden screens. They remind me of the slums of Washington, relegated to the alleys behind rows of fine residences. I'd like to let out! I'd like to tell her! I'm burning! I'm scorching! But what's the use? It's her brother and she knows that it is no secret that he is a politician. That's what I'm afraid of—her own brother is a politician and there must be bad blood in the family."

"It might all be different," interposed Elaine, embar-

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rassed by his ominous silence, "if my brother and Senator Shaw had not had a political difference."

R. R. grinned savagely, showing his teeth. "I wonder if she expects me to swallow that excuse?" he muttered privately, and then he said aloud: "I know what Shaw is! I know just as well as your brother does. Doc Scollard is a better man any day; I don't care a drop of blood from the top of my thumb if the one is an unfortunate devil out of a bread-and-butter job and the other a senator. It's the old story of truth on the scaffold and wrong on the throne. Do you know what? It makes me sick! You needn't laugh at me; I know what I am talking about! Rossiter Rembrandt Dickinson doesn't say things unless he is sure of them."

Elaine hastened to assure him that it was his awful seriousness and not his statements which invited her smile; and that explanation seemed to rile him still more, for his brows puckered until they shriveled like a dried peeling.

They were seated in a Pennsylvania Avenue car, rolling homeward toward their studio building, when Elaine remarked in the mere desire to make conversation and end a disagreeable silence: "Don't you admire my brother? Hasn't he a fine sense of humor?"

It was more than the excited and excitable R. R. could stand. The living, boiling volcano burst forth. Our passions are much like Swedish safety matches, harmless enough until rubbed against the surface that supplies the missing element for combustion, then they ignite. "Admire him? Admire him!" he groaned. "Girl, I'd like to know for what? Didn't he refuse to lift a finger to help a starving and worthy man to support himself honestly? He's a demagogue! He's a politician! He and that man Shaw are two of a kind!" R. R. paused; there was a terrorized expression on Elaine's pale face that stopped his unreckoning, fool-

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ish anger with a jerk. She touched the bell, arose from her seat and was out of the car before her eccentric escort could realize what had happened. He had wounded her where she was the most sensitive, and she was too hurt to trust herself to speak, lest the tears that were starting to her eyes should roll down her cheeks.

"Well, it's the truth anyway," he said to himself grimly; "but I was a big fool to shock her with it. Why did I tell her that? I ought to have known better. I'm sorry I hurt her feelings. The truth isn't for women, it's for men; they aren't strong enough to hear it."

He bounded to his feet, tore down the aisle and jumped off the whirling car, without giving the conductor the signal to stop; his fat body rolled in an awkward bundle, head over heels, and he landed on the asphalt pavement, slippery with February ice, in a wriggling heap. The conductor shouted, the motorman yelled; the pedestrians stopped to laugh at his clumsiness; a heavy truck came to a sharp halt amid the voluble curses of its driver, and R. R. scrambled to his feet, severely jolted and bruised, his upper lip cut, but saved from any serious damage by one of those miracles which usually attend accidents. "I always knew, I always predicted that a woman would be the death of me. Haven't I said so a thousand times?" he muttered, taking a quick survey of the rent in his overcoat. "There's no use in trying to avoid it. Kismet!"

"Did you hurt yourself?" asked an old man in the crowd of bystanders as the artist was brushing his clothes with his hands and looking around for Elaine.

"What's it your business?" he replied savagely. "I've been in every big city on earth and I never saw a place to equal Washington yet; no one has anything to do but stand around and gape and watch everybody else! It's the laziest

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town on earth; politics has ruined it. Why don't you go to work?"

The sympathetic old man moved away, wondering from what asylum this lunatic had escaped, and R. R. elbowed his way through the crowd and limped hastily after Elaine, whom he saw hurrying toward the corner to catch the next car. Her tears had dried, but a sorrowful expression still lingered on her face, tightening the refined lines of it.

"I'm sorry," he consoled, planting his burly body beside her, "I'm awfully sorry, I'm just as sorry as a man can be. I didn't mean anything. You know me; you know how gruff and crossgrained I am. I meant politicians, I didn't mean your brother."

Her gaze was fastened straight ahead, as if she pretended not to hear, as if his remarks were addressed to another. The passers-by stared and wondered, their attention attracted by R. R.'s bawling voice; surprised less at this lovers' quarrel than that such a refined and gentle woman should take up with such a brute of a man.

Without heeding where she was going Elaine let R. R. lead her to the market corner, where a crowd was waiting for cross-town cars. "Let's turn into the Mall," he suggested; "I can't talk to you here."

"I don't care to talk, if you will be kind enough to excuse me."

"But I apologized, didn't I? You know how hard it is for me to apologize, and I apologized."

"The apology was gratuitous; I didn't request it." One is never so conscious of one's injury as when the wound is being salved; and the tears started to form in her eyes again.

"Don't cry," he pleaded softly. "I can't bear to see a woman cry. It kills me."

He turned his steps toward the Mall and while deciding

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whether to accompany him or not she was borne along with him, past the dingy restaurants and the squalid stores that fronted the market. After the turmoil and the excitement through which they had passed, the quiet and the serenity of the park came as the odors of balm and pine. The sun shone clearly, it was almost noon, and one could all but hear the snow that had fallen the night before melt at the touch of the warm green grass, pushing up in a premature and mistaken effort to carpet a pathway for spring. The sturdy evergreen trees welcomed the sun and the snow impartially, exhilarated by plunging in extremes, and their dancing shadows played squirrel-like on the paths and the lawns. He wondered as they strolled along what he should say, and she wondered why she had come there to let him say it; determined, whatever his apology, not to accept it.

"Let's sit down here," he said, pointing to a secluded bench and suiting his action to his words. There was nothing for her to do but to follow. "The morning's gone anyway," he added.

"But it's your fault; you came for me."

"That's so; I did; didn't I?" There are many men like R. R. whose serious purpose and high ambitions in life place such an exorbitant value on their time that their hearts are turned into veritable clocks to sob out the flight of seconds and minutes.

Elaine, glancing up, saw the blood trickling from the long cut on his lip.

"What's the matter?" she asked, frightened.

"Oh, nothing, nothing at all." He applied his handkerchief to it.

"But it's bleeding. How did that happen?"

"I jumped off the car to catch you. The fool of a conductor didn't stop and I tumbled."

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"You might have killed yourself. You're reckless."

He shrugged his shoulders, blessing the wound. "What's the difference? No one would care very much, except me, and I shouldn't be left to mourn."

She smiled at his ludicrous logic, poking into the gravel of the walk with the end of her umbrella stick. "Why didn't she say she would be sorry," he thought. "That's it; no one cares for me." He eyed her squarely; she averted her face, still prodding in the gravel as if her words were buried there and she would unearth them.

"Come now, would you care?" he asked.

"Don't be sentimental!"

"Sentimental to ask if you would care if I were killed?"

"Of course it is, when you know I would—anybody would."

"Humph," he growled. His arm had strayed in a trifling proximity to her shoulder, his protective instinct stirred by the very sorrow he himself had caused her. She moved away.

"You don't expect me to cry my eyes out, do you, after you insulted Bruce that way? He's the most unselfish of men. I could——"

"Yes," he interrupted, hoping to appease her, "it seems to me that I read something to that effect in one of the papers. I guess, though, that all brothers are unselfish and noble and all that. I often wish I had a sister."

"You don't deserve one."

"That's perfectly true. I don't suppose she would know what to make out of me any more than anybody else does."

"You are hard to make out; and that's the reason, maybe, why it's hard for you to make others out. You don't understand Bruce."

"I don't know that I want to understand him; I don't care for characters that are too transparent. It's like—well,

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I tried to paint up in Duluth once, and I had to give it up; the atmosphere was too clear, too translucent; everything stands out too rigidly; there's no shadow, no shade to the objects; and that's the way it is with people to my notion; if they haven't streaks of contradiction and shadows they're not interesting."

But Elaine would not be shunted aside from her purpose; and she put Bruce's character before R. R. lovingly, albeit with vigor and enthusiasm.

"Well, I apologize," he said meekly; "I apologize honestly and sincerely."

"And I accept it in the same spirit," she replied.

He heaved an inward sigh of relief—all quarreling on that score was over; so much talk; so little done and the whole morning and its fine light for work gone to the dogs; still it was well wasted, he tried to console himself; it had been spent with her and she appealed to him; she sympathized with his aims—had she not told him so that morning?—and she admired the sincerity and constancy with which he clung to his ideals.

CHAPTER IX

THE HOMAGE OF HYPOCRISY

HONESTY, seeking converts to its cause, lent to Franklin De Wolfe Fiske a bundle of manuscript devoted to certain phases of the Shaw Coal and Oil bill, over which it had moiled with the zeal that only the missionary spirit knows. Fiske, his own mind now made up beyond the peradventure of a doubt as to the enormity of the swindle, gave back the tracts without a word of comment.

When the proselyting documents were returned, Bruce searched the papers in ardent quest for the one sheet—captain over the manuscript—that summed up in brief form the net results of the entire investigation. Repeated search failed to reveal its place in the ranks or at the head of the imposing array of documents. It was his own carelessness rather than the desertion of the trusted one, he charged, that failed to discover it. But it often happens that those who seek for one thing find another; so, as Bruce anxiously fingered leaf after leaf of this much-studied manuscript, he became conscious of the delicate scent, unfolding like a flower, of rose leaves crushed.

Bruce's thoughts, despite himself, wandered away from the dull statistical tables and surveyors' reports to this fragrance that sent a challenge to his memory by way of his nostrils. Finally, as if the challenger had given a fillip to his memory by tweaking his nose, it dawned upon him that this

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was the attar of roses, which had been culled from the fields of Omar's land and been delivered in person by the direct representative of the Shah of all the Persias to Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck.

On the wings of the fragrance his thoughts were wafted backward to that dinner at the Hammersmiths', and he recalled how his recollection of the events of that night came to a close with Georgia in the arms of Sydney P. Shaw. So with a full orchestra of all instruments may a quiet music be brought to a clangorous silence!

The conclusion was easy enough, even for duller wits. Georgia's nimble fingers had handled those documents meant only for her father's ruder clasp. But why had she done this? He gave himself over to reflection, consideration of all else dying out of his mind as the gray died out of his glittering eyes, but at the end of an hour he was only lost the deeper in the labyrinth of his own construction.

The puzzle absorbed him, and his life for that week would have been lived within the walls of self, dead to action and the outer world, were not a play spectacular in effects, inimical to dreams, going on in the Senate. For it was during one of those days, crowded with incident, that the McAllister Anti-Child Labor bill came up and passed by a large majority. Popular clamor, the fires of which were fanned to flames by the excitement of a whole people, had aroused the Olympian senators, careless of mankind, to action at last.

As guile and craft, which had opposed Bruce with every known parliamentary shift, burned incense before the altars of guilelessness, our hero was naturally more dumfounded than elated. The gods, reading the hearts of the Pharisees, frowned none the less when the hypocritical incense arose skyward. And Bruce, far less divine than human, looked

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to the left hands of his enemies now that they proffered the right. He gazed inquiringly around the Senate. Scarcely a face in it was radiant with the joy of victory, not a one wore a visage gloomy with the lines carved by defeat. The great battle had been fought; the great battle had been won; and its soldiery sat there indifferent, as if a signal to advance had not been given, and would never be blown through the mouth of a challenging trumpet. The mills of legislation, grinding its endless grist automatically as silently, absorbed them all.

What signified it? What meant this scene, exposed voluntarily, designedly, to the view of an applauding public too easily diverted. Our hero, finding short surcease from a compelling puzzle, is brought face to face with the sphinx of sealed lips. But the seal on the lips is broken and the sphinx speaks.

"Ah," he murmured to himself softly, "so that's it!"

His swarthy face lighted as if struck by a shaft of sunbeams; in their full grayness his eyes glittered. His legs unlocked, ready to carry him with a lunge to his feet. Retrospection seized him and lifted him, scornful of places, to that old-fashioned garden of the Polish embassy, and that perfect night, dropped like a jewel out of the hand of spring, and in his ears again came Inez's voice saying the truth unwillingly:

"I heard Justice Addams say: 'I don't think the Supreme Court will countenance it. We are trespassing too violently on individual rights in this country. The parents ought to decide whether their children are to work or not.'"

So that was it! The Supreme Court would declare his bill unconstitutional. It was to be battledored and shuttlecocked for the amusement of a dissatisfied people, until other

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interests claimed their flagging attention and its very existence had been forgotten.

Bruce sat in quiet, the minister of his mood, deaf to the roar of the mills of legislation grinding out the endless grist of measures that zealous senators had poured into the hoppers, fearful lest the speeding moment take opportunity away.

CHAPTER X

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

THE long dinner was over finally—in this spirit some day perhaps the last bored mortal shall greet the end of the world—and Bruce McAllister drew what is physiologically known as a sigh of relief. He was freed now from the prolonged conversation of that soporific lady, Mrs. Van Twyne, the author. Of her it has been said that she went to bed unknown and awoke famous; and many in the world regretted that she had not been allowed to sleep on. She herself wore a sad look as if lamenting the fact that they had called her too soon.

In the drawing-room Inez came to Bruce's rescue while the authoress tried to engage Secretary Scarborough in a conversation on Egyptian inscriptions, a subject in which that great man was as interested and about which he knew as much as of modern sociology. The moment opportunity cleared the way Inez said to Bruce hurriedly:

"Georgia is deeply interested in the Shaw Coal and Oil Lands bill."

"I know," he nodded.

"How?"

He told her of the trail left behind by the perfumed papers.

"But my evidence is more direct. She has been questioning me adroitly several times during this last week to pump me to find out what you thought and knew about the bill."

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"And you told her?"

"Nothing."

"We are no nearer; she merely acts in Sydney's interest and he in Anthony's."

Inez dropped her voice still lower. "But she fears you. She knows you suspect that something is not as it should be. She begged me as indirectly as she could to use my influence with you. She is nervous and high-wrought, and you know how calm she usually is."

"What aroused her suspicion?"

"A hint her father dropped. Don't ask me any more, will you? I'm not particularly proud of how I came by that last bit of knowledge."

He was about to persist when Georgia and Fiske drew near. Bruce and Inez, detecting that odor, faint, flowerlike, as of rose leaves crushed, glanced involuntarily at each other. The golden Georgia wondered what that look betokened. Fiske drawled out suddenly:

"I don't know, McAllister, but that it would be the right thing for you to honestly earn a dollar's worth of your salary before the day ends by coming into my library with me to explain several of the facts you jotted down in the last bunch of papers you lent me about this confounded Shaw Coal and Oil Lands bill. You're here now and you're not apt to be in so good a place to-morrow at this time."

Bruce assented. Fiske mumbled incoherent words to the effect that he was rapidly getting at an age where each of his steps was worth as much to him as each of his words would be to posterity, and they passed under the stairs through the large closet that led into the library. The room seemed as ironical and inscrutable as Fiske himself. Your library is your man!

"Well, McAllister," he drawled, stepping over a tiger

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

rug toward the long oak table on which a pile of papers and magazines in all languages and from all countries towered Babel-like toward the ceiling, "I searched all through my desk for the summary that was lost from the last bundle of coal and oil documents you lent me and I can't find it."

"I wouldn't bother about it, Fiske; I can draw up another." Bruce made no doubt but that summary was now one of the valued possessions of Sydney P. Shaw.

"It will turn up, I'm sure," he went on. "I might have known without wading through the bundle of evidence that anything in which Shaw plunges his hand was crooked; still it's a trifle more artistic to actually establish him a thief than to merely guess at his complicity."

Talking thus, one lobe of his brain occupied in calling up the pictures that his words suggested, another lobe of his massive intellect suddenly hinted to Fiske that he had left a compartment of his heavy desk unsearched, and marching over to the corner of the room where it stood, he unlocked and pulled down its broad leaf. Bruce, turning to watch him, thought that the light-woven Senna Kelim rug, hanging like a piece of drapery over the shut closet door, fluttered, and he observed rather vaguely that the door itself, which had been tightly closed when he entered the room, was open just enough to be perceptible now.

It was at about this moment when Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck stepped lightly inside of the closet; and it was only a few seconds later when Inez Hammersmith, having seen the movement executed with serpentine grace and circumspection, and having guessed its purpose, tiptoed forward and turned the outside lock of the door.

"The capacity for disappearance possessed by inanimate objects," drawled Fiske, still rummaging within the depths of the desk, "impresses one quite as much as the capacity

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of women for slipping into places where their husbands might least expect to find them."

"I probably lost the thing myself; don't worry. It's inconsequential. I can get another drawn up with half the work that it will take you to find it."

They sat down beside the table on which Fiske recklessly cleared a space by thrusting to one side a base of his Babel tower and they fell to a discussion of mooted points. Bruce explaining Fiske's questions with an emphatic thumb, remained silent for a second or two, reflecting, and then he said with the suddenness of inspiration:

"There's a mistake, I think, in that last table of figures. My stenographer must have made it. If that's wrong, of course the whole chart is wrong. If you have the Secretary of the Interior's report for this last year I should like to verify the total. I must make certain of my foundation before I build higher."

"I have the report in the annex to my library in the back room upstairs. I'll send the man after it. No, I'll be my own hero and valet in this instance and get it myself," and conforming his movements to his words, Fiske lifted his massive body out of the chair and strode up the stairs.

A noise, barely audible, like that of a vowel sound long drawn out attracted Bruce's attention; turning he saw Inez Hammersmith standing a few feet inside the room, just removed from the threshold, her finger laid ominously across her sealed lips. She pointed to the closet door and vanished—to give herself time to think over what she had done, now that it had been done.

Bruce arose stealthily. The closet door was shut, the space between itself and the oak frame had disappeared. His sensitive nostrils detected the faint delicate aroma, flowerlike, as of rose leaves crushed. He laid a sudden hand on the

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

bronze knob, turning it adroitly. It was evident that a force on the inside was resisting him. His long, lank frame pulled with all the strength it possessed.

The golden Georgia, all ashamed, her face covered with her hands, stood revealed. A glance and he fathomed the situation.

"I'm at your mercy," she gasped, her eyes seeking the floor.

"And the merciful shall be blessed," he answered.

Her crushed, humbled form, raising itself erect and dominant, expressed her gratitude. "And the least of the mercy that I ask is for myself." Music graced her voice again.

"And the other?"

"Ah, senator, you know."

He thought a second. "Yes, I know."

"And you will grant him mercy, too?" Her voice was impassioned, eager, aglow with warmth. She pressed closer to him; he caught the flesh thrill of her bare shoulders, her deep breast.

"In so far as I can be. What does your idea of mercy imply?"

The diplomacy acquired by a lifelong residence in Washington hinted that to her the quality of mercy would not be strained if he did no more than withdraw his objections to the passage of the Shaw Coal and Oil bill.

His swarthy face hid like a mask the thought going on behind it. "But why are you so troubled? The bill only concerns Sir Anthony and his fortunes. My efforts are only leveled against him."

"Ah, senator, why torture me? You know better. Our secret and our fate are in your hands. You are only waiting for the sensational moment to expose our part in the Excelsior."

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"Your part?"

"Again the thumbscrews, senator! Would you have me scream with pain? Our part! Yes, our part!"

Intuition stalked to his aid. "Yes, I knew your fortunes and Wyckoff's were severed."

"Ever since we organized the Excelsior."

"But if you were merely concerned alone——"

"It is idle to discuss that. What is, is. His fate and mine are one. Listen!" Rapidly, perfervidly, from a throat whose pulse beat could be seen with every word, she laid her future before him in the shape of an allegory that hurry and fear wove together in the stress of the moment. Stripped of superficial symbolism it meant that if the bill passed she was to cease being Shaw's mistress and become his wife. She stood at the crossways, fate lingering there with her, undecided in which direction to point. He could influence it.

"No," he answered inviolably.

Her white arms rocked toward him as if involuntarily; her warm breath was on his cheek, and her lips close to his poured forth her plea with all the ardor and the passion of which she was capable. Beauty, wit, the attractiveness of sex, pleaded with her. It was test for the iron in the soul of the man.

"No," came his unchangeable answer; "no."

The voice that he believed had touched the very climax of passion and of seductiveness, reaching the highest point of appeal that a woman can make to a man, passed above it with supreme ease. The step of Fiske was heard on the stairs over the sloping closet wall, and Bruce was thankful to the beneficence of his destiny for the sound.

"Your father comes," he whispered.

She shuddered. He pointed her into the closet.

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

When Fiske entered the room, Bruce in careless posture, his hands in his pockets, was standing near the door.

A half hour later Bruce walked beside Inez on her way to the carriage. Her mother and father lingered in the warm night on the stoop above to chat with Fiske.

"Thanks to you," he said, "I found out everything—all." He shared with her the secret, holding back nothing.

"I feel contrite, half ashamed of my own share in it. Under the excitement of the moment one does these things, to regret them afterwards."

"She was eavesdropping."

"I took that into consideration even in my haste."

"You must have loved me to have done it?"

"No, the love of intrigue, the excitement of the game——"

"But you knew what it meant to me. You would never have gone so far if love had not led you on." He peered deeply into the limpid brown eyes of her beautiful face.

"Hush, Bruce McAllister, hush! My father and mother are but a step behind you."

CHAPTER XI

THE ORDEAL

R. R. DICKINSON, with the illogical impetuosity that characterized all his conduct, gave to Elaine McAllister one day the condemnatory documents that he had received from Doc Scollard, and quite naturally Elaine put them into Bruce's hands no sooner than they came into her own, which happened to be an hour or so after his return from the eventful dinner at Fiske's. A glance proved their importance to Bruce. One of the papers that Scollard had abstracted from Shaw's desk, and which he had intrusted to the artist, was Shaw's own prospectus of the Excelsior Developing Company, with the original notes of the astute author; all of which served to strengthen the conclusion Bruce had drawn from Georgia's enforced confession to him. Guilt, like a detective, tapped Shaw on the shoulder, complacently mocking at his protestations of innocence.

In the morning he telephoned to Inez, hinting at the important discovery.

"I have something to say, too, that is important—for me," she returned. "Can't you come over this afternoon for a while?"

That afternoon found him in the Hammersmith library, love always going before business in this world—when the business happens to be the nation's. In that room, nestled

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in the soothing quietude of its deep rich colors, a curiosity, restless and out of harmony with its surroundings, sat there with him. There had been in the very inflection of her voice that morning, rather than in the words she spoke, a promise of the unusual.

Her presence, superb and vital as a nymph rising from invigorating waters, beamed upon him. He had expected that she would meet him as it were with open arms, reckoning without a nature that was chary of concessions and which was prone to make a recipient of one of them humbly appreciative before he received another.

Moreover, there was something in the wind that even his keen intuition could not detect. The sprite, implacable enemy of mankind, whose peculiar business it is to litter love's path with obstacles and make it difficult, had been busy during the interval of their last meeting of the night before and the present moment. For Inez had learned from her mother's unguarded confession that her father's investment in the Excelsior Developing Company had not only been serious but excessive. She knew enough of business to conclude that defeat for the Shaw bill might bring ruin to her father, and she was appalled at the part her fascination for the mere game itself, and her love for Bruce, had betrayed her into playing.

She expected that Bruce would come to her rescue now in quite the same spirit that she had come to his, and the mere thought that he might refuse his assistance made her tremble inwardly. She could put herself in perfect accord with his position on the importance of those acres remaining in possession of the Government; she knew what it meant to him and what it might mean to those theories he held so dear. But none the less friendship was friendship, and one sacrifice ought to be free to call upon another.

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In the future, to which she had been accustomed to confide all her petty troubles, another opportunity quite as great would arise for him, and for her sake he ought to hold his fervor in temporary abeyance.

He started to preface his discovery with an amatory by-play; she checked it with a light phrase or two, as out of keeping with the occasion and with honesty itself, since she approached him to-day on a different footing. So, at any rate, had the sprite inspired her to think and speak from its invisible prompter's box.

He confided the nature of his secret, laying stress on its value as indisputable evidence to impeach Shaw and his bill when the one brought forward the other in the Senate. The shadow on his swarthy face deepened, he shook a long and nervous leg, and even enthusiasm itself waned and died before her indifference. She noticed it and her sympathy went out to him, but she said, forcing herself to speak composedly as the imp dictated:

"I know you find me indifferent; I am sorry that I must be so; but I am sorrier still that the telling evidence has fallen into your hands."

Speechless a second he looked at her, his blue-gray eyes aglitter. "Why?" he brought forth at last, the only word he could find to express the jumble of queries that welled to his lips.

"I may need your help for the other side."

Rigidly he confronted her, the blood coursing cold through his veins. "I don't understand! Which side?"

"My father's side, which happens to be Shaw's now. Listen!" She stood upright before him, her eyes fixed beseechingly on his. "I told you some time ago in this very house, that in return for my assistance, I might call upon you for yours."

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"I remember perfectly. You were indefinite and I tried to make you more definite."

"The nature of the case forced me to be indefinite," she said. "I was not sure then whether or not my father had made the investment. But you promised."

"Yes," his long thin lips drew together, tightening into a knot. His thoughts leaped far out beyond his words, seeking strength in the resolution built up by the ideals of a lifetime.

"You will keep it, then?"

He stooped, bringing his shoulders down to a level with hers. "What did I promise exactly?"

"Your assistance, even as I gave mine."

He nodded. "But what do you want it for?"

"I want," she said, faltering over her words despite herself, "to save my father from ruin—a ruin which I helped plunge him into in order to help you—I want you to vote for the Shaw bill and use your influence in its favor."

"Oh, I can't do that! I won't do that! Much as I love you, I can't do that!" His tortured spirit groaned. "It's not fair! It's not just! I made the promise on the spur of the moment, not caring or knowing to what I bound myself. Now I find that unwittingly I bound myself to something that involves my honor. Under the circumstances a promise of that kind is absolved by the very terms upon which it was made. I was willing to promise anything in the world to you; to do anything in the world for you; and I still am—anything in the world you ask—but my honor remains my own."

"It's a conventional way of breaking a promise. As far back as my reading goes, men have sought to save their honor at the expense of their word."

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"So be it! I cannot! I cannot."

"But it's a mere sentiment with you as against my father's life work. A mere sentiment!"

"I'm sorry; I'm sorry as I can be that your father was drawn into that unfortunate scheme; and all I have, anything else——"

"Phrases! Empty phrases!"

It was her power over him, and not the justice of her cause, that she felt challenged now, and the unsuccessful pleader made way for the woman spurned.

"If you think them phrases, put me to the test. I ask nothing better."

"I have put you to the test and you have failed. I risked much for you; I did things for you that I should not have done, and now I ask a small sacrifice from you——"

"But I am not my own master."

"Nonsense! A man of your strength of character not his own master!"

"There are some things in this world stronger than we are. Honor is one of them."

"Friendship is another, and I cannot remain friends with one on whom I cannot rely always and ever."

"You are cruel, Inez; you are unjust."

Her pink cheeks flushed to red. Life, denying her nothing so far, had spoiled her. Her pride was bruised to the core by the refusal to yield her anything on the part of this one man to whom she had granted so much. Inwardly she felt a rush of uncontrollable anger sweep over her, as when a petulant child she had stamped her foot.

"You shall not call me Inez," she said. "I will not permit it. It is an assumption."

He turned to leave the room; she wanted to call out to

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him but she could not—something in her stronger than herself had her by the throat.

A moment afterwards the sprite, bounding head over heels in the sheer exuberance of delight, made mows at a beautiful woman, kneeling on the floor, her face on the divan, crying.

CHAPTER XII

JUST A WORD

ON the morning of the last day of the short session Sydney P. Shaw arose as jubilant from his bed as the sun out of the clouds. He had been promised more than enough votes to pass his bill and all was in readiness in Wall Street to assure success for the Excelsior Developing Company. A careful inspection of the scheme in its entirety showed not a single detail that refused to dovetail with the other details to which it had been fitted.

The danger, had Sydney and his captains of finance but known it, threatened no one particular, but the whole gigantic scheme. Sir Anthony satisfied long ago of Shaw's duplicity and treachery, angry beyond words, lay in waiting with his powerful craft to wreck the whole enterprise. Anthony had learned long ago that leisure is the better part of vengeance, and he resolved to sink the Excelsior first and to make its treacherous admiral walk the plank afterwards. Once sunk it would be easy to hoist the Excelsior out of the water, give it a different name and add it as another first-class craft to the huge flotilla of the Universal.

To put the same idea in Anthony's more direct way, he purposed to have the Senate veto Shaw's Coal and Oil bill in order that Shaw and his abettors might have their exquisite pains for their trouble. Later on, biding a favorable

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hour, he would have a new bill introduced to give him the exclusive right of annexing this land to his own properties.

To defeat Shaw, to whom many votes had been promised, Sir Anthony stood in need of Bruce McAllister and the influence and sentiment that Bruce might yield. Therefore, word reached Bruce indirectly that if he wished to form a treaty of alliance with the forces opposed to the Shaw Coal and Oil Lands bill he might meet them on this last morning of the short session at the hotel Rhodomontade. Bruce, of course, surmised that the invitation emanated from Sir Anthony, and a little fearful that he never might leave Troy with character unstained if he entered it by way of the wooden horse of Anthony's contrivance, he held long parley with the far-sighted Butler. It was in accord with Butler's theory of political warfare that a small battalion, when employed against one of first-rate dimensions, must venture tremendous odds if it would have a victory. He advised a signing of the treaty.

Bruce, meanwhile, preparing to enter Sir Anthony's web, was evolving a plan whereby he might break its entangling threads and weave them into a pattern that was more to his own liking.

The morning found him pat with the appointed hour in the pillared and palmed lobby of the Rhodomontade. The hotel, as anyone may see in its advertisements, was constructed regardless of cost and, which is not therein stated, regardless of taste. It had been the purpose of the management to pave the floor with bright patines of silver dollars, but at the last minute it changed its lavish mind and distributed its gold with such impartial largess that one might see the cost of things not only written on the floor in plain figures but everywhere else. Here the dollar shrieked far louder through a gilt trumpet than the name of Bruce McAllis-

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ter, whispered by the clerk, traveled upstairs through the telephone.

A moment afterwards the elevator carried him to the room where the name had won acceptance for the man, and our hero found himself in an apartment that was furnished in a manner exquisite enough to have won the commendation of the minister sent to Washington by his majesty, Mumbo III, of Senegambia. The senators in waiting, so famous have become their dignified, grave, white-bearded countenances, need no introduction now. We need but say that at Anthony's behest here had assembled themselves, without even knowing what he wanted, the woolen senator, the senator who carried in the pockets of his mines sufficient coal to set the world on fire, the cotton senator, and—well, in short, here was convened, one might say, the United States Senate and its president *ex-officio*, Sir Anthony Wyckoff.

Salutations befitting the solemnity of the occasion were exchanged and then Sir Anthony called the Senate to order. The Shaw Coal and Oil Lands bill was discussed by Anthony and flagellated for the iniquity of each of its separate clauses. His point of view was altruistic, for he confined his arguments to the injury the measure would work to America. Nobody understood the value of time better than Anthony; he had done before the second hand on his watch had circled around five times.

The distinguished woolen senator, arranging his white silken whiskers, took longer to agree with Anthony than Anthony did to tell him to what he should agree. In the senator's opinion it would augur ill for the future of America to allow these forty millions of acres to slip beyond the country's control. It was a powerful weapon, did Government but hold on to it, wherewith monopoly might be forced to its knees. With logic so square-based none could disagree,

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and there was a shaking of distinguished white beards breastward. There followed a few speeches, short as Sir Anthony's, that left no loophole through which dissension could stick its ugly head. The pompous senator, whose fetich was corporation and who had made some of its laws and who upheld all of them, succinctly outlined a course of action to be followed in the Senate that afternoon, for like a wise general skilled in the cunning of parliamentary procedure he was willing to leave nothing to accident. And so even before a gun had been fired was Sydney's battle lost for him.

Sir Anthony, his business being done, arose nervously and eyed his watch—it brought him in an income of an incredible number of thousands with every movement of its minute hand. A few blocks removed, in the shed of the Pennsylvania depot, his special train, puffing steam laboriously, was waiting to carry him westward to close a gigantic deal for the Universal. The magnate put his arm through Bruce's with a compelling affection, his bass voice rolling forth organlike:

"Senator, I rejoice that you can conscientiously be with us; certainly we feel honored to have you ranged on our side."

In his masterful way Sir Anthony moved Bruce, not heeding where he went, into a corner and out of earshot of the mass of senatorial dignity, and he said to him with lowered voice:

"I have something here, senator, that might prove of service to you when the right time comes;" and his small crosseyes twinkling humorously, Sir Anthony drew from his pocket a long white envelope, which he laid in Bruce's hand confidingly and then, glancing again at his watch, bade his adieu and hastened to catch his train.

Bruce, in the full sight of all, moved under the heavy

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electrolier in the center of the apartment and drew forth the missive from its white envelope as one who has naught to conceal. It was the synopsis that Georgia had purloined from his bundle of papers and given to Shaw. Around the border of the square sheet, arabesquelike, were annotations in her fine handwriting and marginalia in Shaw's masculine script.

Like a wise archer Sir Anthony carried two strings to his bow. Bruce, thinking quickly as the senators about to depart lifted their silk hats from the table, guessed the purpose of the second string. Shaw's term would expire at the end of the present session, and Sir Anthony intended to chastise him by drawing his Senate seat from under him and letting him fall headlong into oblivion.

To revert to the original figure, Anthony had come to the conclusion that Bruce, having the advantage of position, could use the second string to better advantage than himself in shooting the arrow that would slay Shaw politically. What legislature, defying the entire people of a State, would dare to return Shaw to the Senate after such damning proofs of his guilt were made public? The stately woolen senator had his hand on the bronze knob, ready to step into the hallway that would take him into a different world, when Bruce McAllister, thrusting into his pocket the recovered synopsis, said suddenly:

"Gentlemen, before you go I have just a word to say that will interest all of you."

The tall lank form straightened, a certain gravity aureoled the swarthy face and the black hair, and a certain determination and sternness lent the aspect of importance to his coarse, heavy features. The silk hats renewed acquaintance with the table. Around him the senators formed an expectant circle.

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"The point," said Bruce, lifting them from the sharp edge of suspense, "is here. The senator from Massachusetts remarked that if the Government retained possession of these forty million acres that it would have an excellent weapon wherewith to fight monopoly. The Government, it is clear, will thus be enabled to go into the coal and oil business on its own account, and by competition force a greedy monopoly to sell at cheaper prices."

The senators were disappointed and they looked it. Bruce had promised a surprise and he scarcely had kept his word by this phonographic recording of what already had been said. He spoke on, interpreting their emotion from their glances.

"Now, then, all of you agreed with the senator, and knowing that you are sincere men, loyal to your convictions, I am sure that you will help me to put the Government in eternal possession of these lands. I propose this afternoon, therefore, not to vote against the Shaw bill, but to offer up an amendment to it that will bring about the end we wish and bind the Government for all time to come never to lease or sell those lands."

They were off the edge of one suspense merely to be hooked by another. The woolen senator spoke first, moving round his theme with the skill of a graceful skater on thin ice. Rarely as he and the senator from Illinois agreed, he yielded to no man in his admiration for the brilliancy and profundity of Bruce's intellect; but he could not see how any sane mind could reach so rash a conclusion. To his own way of thinking, to vote against the Shaw bill was one thing, to vote for McAllister's proposed amendment to it was quite another. Neither his conscience nor his duty to his country would permit him to make light of so serious a distinction.

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So spake the oracle, and the chorus gathered around him chanted with meet and solemn variants his fate-interpreting dithyrambs.

But when the voices died away Bruce McAllister, a Siegfried born to overthrow the gods, defying their mandates in the name of the people, said quietly:

"Very well, let each of us stand on his record and none of us be ashamed of where he has been seen, of what he said, or by whose summons he came hither. I am not and I know you will not be."

"Do you mean to say, Senator McAllister—do I interpret your threat correctly—that if we don't promise to vote for your proposed amendment that you are going to publish to the world an account of the morning's transactions?" so spake the senator learned in the law.

"Exactly," answered the friend of democracy.

Visible as the dark lines of the storm on the face of the sky and the waters were the astonishment and fear written on the countenances of Bruce's auditors. They foresaw the letters, high as a house, black as death, in which a sensational press would scarehead the world: "Anthony Wyckoff Calls a Special Meeting of the Senate. McAllister Saves the Common People Again." The picture so conjured up was not entrancing.

"This is dishonorable," stated the cotton senator, his silver-white imperial wagging contemptuously.

"Maybe," returned Bruce. "I am not holding out for punctilios. I wish the amendment passed."

"Regardless of means, of methods, or the honor——"

"That is out of the consideration. I have a big work to do and I will not stop to argue what constitutes honor and what doesn't. I wish the amendment passed," returned Bruce, interrupting the cotton and politics of the South.

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"Vague statements are all very well," declared the senator, who was millions of miles remote from his coal, "but the American public is too intelligent to be so credulous. It is your word against ours. The people will demand proof."

"And they shall have it," said Bruce, "in the shape of a full stenographic report of this meeting from the beginning of it until now. Oh, Butler!"

A door opened and the blithe correspondent entered with a Holy-High-Jinks expression on his sloping face to take his place in that entrancing charade: "The Press, Democracy, and the United States Senate."

Over the pretty tableau we let fall the curtain while we remark, as its silken folds descend, that those who have secrets must henceforth be careful not to whisper them in a hotel like the Rhodomontade, as full of men, maids, and boys as of sounding marble and tinkling gilt, mercenary and sordid as their surroundings. The walls have ears, O Anthony, and though they were stopped with all thy gold yet would there be chinks and crevices!

CHAPTER XIII

A BATTLE IN THE SENATE

ON the way from the Hotel Rhodomontade to the Capitol the senators, who disappeared by twos on foot and in vehicles, naturally talked less about literature and the fine arts—a subject that usually engrosses their conversation—than about the audacity of Bruce McAllister. They nominated it, with expletives generally expressed in dashes, despicable.

Here was the object of their excited debate: Was the man only bluffing or had he bluffed with the intention of fulfilling his threat? The woolen senator, argued that at the critical moment audacity would fail him, and he would not dare to make his assertion public. Whereto answers King Coal: Having naught to lose and all to win wherefore shall he not dare all? Trust the vulgar upstart and demagogue, my sincere possessor of conservative millions, to pull even truth by the beard! Reverence for the Senate and its fine traditions? Bah! he would defile them with pitch, would his beloved common people but reward his labors with laughter now and votes anon!

And when our hero, to the invisible flag unfurled by his conscience, to the drum beat of his eager heart, stepped into the Senate chamber he asked himself yet again before the fray: How is it with mine adversaries? Do they stand in such great fear of my vaunt that they will do as I com-

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manded and vote for my amendment lest I expose them to the world, or will they think me incapable of carrying out my threat and put me to a defy?

Noon came; the senators took their places; the body was called to order, and the morning hour began. The clacking of the wheels of legislation fretted our hero's nerves as familiar noises and sights do when one waits for a big event to thrust them into the background. He sat there, as democracy never should, unreadable; a curious study for his enemies who wondered what might be going on in his mind while he wondered what plot their angry wits might be concocting.

Fame, voicing it abroad that democracy shall speak to-day through its chosen mouthpiece, filled the galleries! Inez, contrite in fleeting moments, more determined in her pride, hour in and out, looked down on the scene, careful to avoid young democracy's appealing eye and show her glances were not meant for him. The golden Georgia, watching Sydney jubilant and sure of success as he sat there toying with his Hyperion locks, and building his castles on and out of Sir Anthony's acres—the golden Georgia, still in dread of the man McAllister, burned in the hot fire of suspense. Anthony would take these lands from the Government; Sydney would take them away from Anthony; Anthony, chuckling as his trains speeds him afar, would take them away from Sydney; and Bruce, these gracious senators unwillingly assisting him, would give them back to Cæsar again. So would justice, ideally considered, complete its circle!

But, hush! on the green carpeted floor the long, lank form of Bruce McAllister lifted itself. His long arms shot outward awkwardly while he raised his voice in hot denunciation of the Shaw bill, praising the virtues of the amendment he had offered up. Progress was beseeching the Government to take control and develop these lands in the name

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of his people. The greater democracy, calling its millions all over the earth to establish the coöperative commonwealth, demanded the innovation. Evolution, watching from its coign of vantage the march it had mapped out when time was young, pointed the way.

The bill became as a watchtower, which he mounted to take a broader outlook on the big problems of the generation. He spoke of the two classes that had endured while whole civilizations had shifted under their feet, changing their names only, their positions never—the rich and the poor, those who hired and those who toiled! Their clashing interests had precipitated the eternal conflict that hurled world after world into the dust, out of which other worlds arose and gave birth to new masters and different slaves!

"The centuries," he said, "could no more preserve a nation that was half capital and half labor than one that was half slave and half free." He raised his hand aloft, swinging a whip to castigate society with its lashes, called by him the proverbs of a proletarian.

"Charity is the dust that the automobiles of the rich throw into the eyes of the poor to keep them from hurling stones at the reckless chauffeur."

"The backs of the poor must either stiffen or break; in either case the rich must dismount."

"Poverty is a disgrace; it bespeaks the ignorance of the poor who have the remedy in their own hands and know it not."

"Life is a game of blindman's buff through which the poor stumble, blindfolded, exploited by wealth, mocked at by law, abandoned by justice."

He stood aloof from bitterness; just the facts were his allies, fancy the general under which he marshalled them into line. He paused before winging his way still higher. The

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steel-gray died out of his eyes; they ceased to flash, sinking into the calm of a dreamy blue. He pictured the better time when poverty should join the limbo reserved by an advanced humanity for the horrors of a barbarian era. He prophesied the return of the golden age. And Inez? She mounted with him, despite herself. He had carried her too far, step by step, even without her knowledge and consent, that she should turn back now when his organlike voice swayed and compelled her whole emotional being.

She stood with him on the mountain peaks, led thither by the love she would not now deny, the cold clear air, breathed by no lungs, blowing around her. She communed with the stars! By sheer force of soul and voice he carried her into his Utopia! The lines on his face furrowed deeper and deeper through that swarthy skin as if his were the sorrow of a Moses fated to stand forgotten on Pisgah while his people stormed the fabled land. Her fancy was heated by the warm blood of her heart, which rose in her bosom and fluttered toward him in the full majesty of that divine sorrow.

He ceased, and sitting down crossed his long legs and gazed through the limitless silence that brooded, timelike, over the Senate.

In one way his radical speech had endangered his chances for success, since to vote for his amendment now would be, as it were, to charge the very voters with having built the fires from which McAllister had seized the destructive torch. On the other hand his radicalism—the flamboyant waving of the brand seized from the burning—came like one threat hurled on top of the other, as if the man were reckless as fearless, and would have his own way though he fell crushed by the pillars of the house he had marked for destruction.

The moment for balloting came. Bruce believed that the

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first vote cast by any of Anthony's senators would be decisive since if one set the danger he had threatened at naught the others, plucking up courage from desperation, would defeat his amendment—Bruce, arguing thus, felt his nerves palpitate like pulses when that first vote was cast.

The first senator declared for the McAllister amendment; the second, following out the lines of Bruce's argument, did likewise, then the third. Bruce was victor! And yet to him, contrite as the great ones are in the hour of triumph, the victory brought small elation. The little man, blown into power by circumstance, would deny that indispensable ally the credit deserved for his success, and the next time, circumstance deserting, he falls flat, blames a thankless world for its ingratitude to superiority. But the mind of girth is inclined to praise circumstance overmuch, to take its own shortcomings severely to task and prepare itself for that next still greater ordeal when it must look to itself alone to fight its battle royal.

And Bruce, by nature introspective, gifted with a keen insight into the vanity of things that inclines toward melancholy, questioned the value of his singular triumph. After all it was merely the intervention of Anthony Wyckoff, stepping down like a god from the machine of commerce, that had saved the day. Had the god turned the other way how would it have fared with him? And to what subterfuge and trickery had he not been obliged to stoop in order to force the enemy into submission? He had borrowed their own methods, fought them with their own weapons, stolen from their own detestable arsenal. He was sick, sick to the soul of it all!

Shaw, plucking Hyperion whiskers, arising to address the Senate, shook him out of his despondent mood. Striding the Senate with the confident impudence of a Colossus, who

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save Sydney himself would have known that he was a ruined man and was surveying from that dizzy height of complacency his own desolated monarchy? And besides financial bankruptcy the lost bill meant political ruin; for a hint, coming from one of Sir Anthony's senators, had told him that the magnate intended to plunge him into immeasurable obscurity.

He blamed McAllister for every single bit of it, and he meant before he was hurled into that abyss from which there was small hope of arising ever, while all the blue devils of defeat stood there grinning and grimacing at him, to square the accounts that had been accumulating for so long, and to rend his archenemy hip and thigh.

Ridicule was to be his knife—deadliest of all possible weapons if the woman one loves be present when skillful hands wield it. He paid mock homage to Bruce's achievement, it being his wish, he said, to lay his wreath of admiration at the foot of this Apollo of democracy. The facetious comparison of Bruce to the Greek god was laid out on fat Rabelaisian lines. Its inimitability deserved a worthier purpose for the effort.

The crafty Shaw smote Bruce in the weakest point. Childishly sensitive in the matter of appearance, his victim writhed. The mercilessness, the brutality of the attack appalled Bruce, and his wits, panic-stricken for the first time in their existence, rushing hither and thither in his bewildered brain, added to his confusion and refused to come to his rescue. Inez's presence had just the effect that Shaw, fortunate comedian, chastising through ridicule, desired.

The Senate found amusement, doubly welcome in this compensatory guise, in the unsparing caricature of its enemy, and a round of hearty laughter rewarded the effort of the nimble-witted artist. The gallery was more boisterous in

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its recognition. Even Georgia was made wretched by this unexpected and sorry spectacle. Inez's emotions were rent, so to say, by hands in conflict; she had been terrified at first by the financial ruin which she believed to await her father, then Bruce's eloquence had carried her beyond herself, then a calmer mood had succeeded in which she reverted to her original fears, and now these were engulfed in so deep a sympathy for him that it was maternal.

The President's gavel made a dignified protest against the outburst of hilarity, smothering it. Craving the silence for forensic purposes Shaw filled it to the last dimension with his pungent wit. The biography of Bruce McAllister occupied him. He lifted him out of the cradle with the hand of ridicule, lampooning his struggle upward, and he crowned the masterpiece with a Juvenalian description of Bruce McAllister, the butcher boy, delivering meat. So did ridicule, dragging Bruce out of his conqueror's chariot by the hair, tie him to its wheels whilst the triumphant Shaw directed its steeds.

The phlegmatic Fiske, sorry for Bruce as a father might be sorry for his son, watching him narrowly, saw his swarthy face flush with wrath as he lifted the cover from his desk and drew something or other from its cluttered interior. He feared that Bruce might lose his self-control, commit a severe breach of the rules, to which Sydney had paid at least a technical obeisance, and subject himself to severe discipline from the Senate.

When Bruce arose and strode down the aisles toward Shaw's desk, Fiske's face lost its bronze color. He lifted himself to his feet and followed Bruce, dismayed by the thought that he intended to inflict bodily chastisement on his tormentor.

Shaw was chatting gayly with his colleagues when Bruce

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approaching caught his eye. The magnetic Sydney changed color and crouched down in his chair involuntarily. The grim look on McAllister's face, the hand concealed behind his back, put him in fear of physical violence.

"This is your property by right, senator," spoke Bruce curtly, laying a long white envelope on Shaw's desk. Wheeling around, he walked back to his seat, averting narrowly a collision with the massive bulk of Franklin De Wolfe Fiske.

Shaw rent the envelope. The papers and the prospectus that Doc Scollard had abstracted from his desk, the summary, covered with his own and Georgia's compromising annotations, shocked his curious gaze. His white hand ceased to stroke his blond beard and his head fell toward his chest.

"McAllister is a man, anyway. My God, what a man McAllister is!" he murmured to himself again and again, trancelike.

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After the heaping of the coals of fire on Shaw's head Bruce, spurred by restlessness, passed into the corridor. He was crossing its tessellated floor when, espying Fiske at the end of it, he beckoned to him.

To the ironical one, cold now that the need for all sympathy had passed, he unburdened himself. "In the Senate," he said, "I feel like a good Christian—in the arena of Nero's day."

"Turn Roman, McAllister," came the rejoinder and then right afterwards: "Let's go in and watch the President of these United States signing bills. Temporary aberration may bring the poor man to such a pass that he will counter-sign that Child-Labor bill of yours."

The bronze handle of the arched door before which Bruce and Fiske stood was turned and they stepped into the room

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reserved for the chief executive on his visits to the Capitol during those last few hours before adjournment. Lavishness, bickering with good taste, was responsible for the decorations of the apartment. Brumidi's portraits of Washington and his first cabinet honored the walls; and the friends of art's youth, allegories of Liberty, Religion and Executive Authority, looked at the archtypes of Exploration, History and Discovery, bearing the symbols of their several domains. Pier glasses stretching from floor to ceiling compensated for the space they took up by adding an illusory length. Before the oblong mahogany table, with rounded edges, the white-haired President sat, looking askance at the piles of engrossed bills his signature was to launch into law.

The room was filled to the point where more would have crowded it. Correspondents appeared and disappeared, among others little Butler, who was at a loss to interpret Bruce's sober visage, his important victory duly considered. Pages tripped in and out, hurried sharply by the fat sergeant-at-arms toward the engrossing clerks, anathematized for their slowness. Messages came in from the House and the Senate. Secretary of the Navy Kinkaid, Secretary of the Treasury Scarborough, all the members of the Cabinet, with any of their clerks that had precise knowledge of their department's legislation, were there to give the conscientious President their advice concerning this avalanche of bills that threatened to roll over and bury honesty itself. Let the curious consider the proportion of honesty to the bills!

Senators and congressmen, whose battered bills were drawing up to face the last ordeal, chatted gayly with one another, occupying the hospitable leather chairs and the lounges inviting to indolence. The President laid down his hard-driven pen at intervals and talked freely with all those who had any claim on his distinguished consideration. He

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joked now and then lightheartedly with the sponsors of the various decrees, the fate of which he controlled.

There was a continual hurried going and soft coming, the quiet opening and the careful shutting of doors, a gliding about of the pages, the sharp-voiced scolding of the bewildered sergeant-at-arms, an ingress and egress of the great ones, a steady hum of confused words; and amid this the ticking of the pendulum in the tall clock, proportioned like Bruce, was quite as lost as the hum of an insect in the rustling of a forest of leaves.

Fiske and Bruce approached the table, and the President extended a cordial hand, engaging with them in a conversation that the muse of history, overworked that day, was too busy to record, when another handful of engrossed bills was laid on the table. The President, turning his eyes on these, remarked to Bruce jovially:

"Well, here's your child, McAllister. I don't know but we might say it's your family, since it's framed for the benefit of all children. I congratulate you on the passage of the bill, and I don't think I've ever signed anything in either of my administrations that gives me so much genuine pleasure."

"Let McAllister have the pen, Mr. President," drawled out Fiske as he was affixing his coarse-lettered signature, "that with one stroke is going to throw two million little children out of a job."

"And who may not stay out of a job very long," rejoined Bruce.

CHAPTER XIV

THE TRIBUTE

I DON'T like it! You oughtn't to have come! Aren't things bad enough without taking this extra precaution of making them worse?"

Georgia turned as if struck full in the face. So anxious had been her sympathy to extend her regrets over his defeat that immediately after Shaw's onslaught of Bruce she had sent him word to meet her in the marble room. She had risked all in the coming and Shaw's rebuke crushed what was left of her bruised spirit and her wounded ambition.

"My father had left the Senate; I didn't suppose the risk was inordinate. I didn't know you considered it a disgrace to be seen with me," she stammered, white as the fluted columns of Carrara that surrounded them.

Shaw colored; anger shook him. He hated, after the fashion of men, this beautiful woman by whom he thought his career to have been ruined. He was glad, being fundamentally weak and craven at heart, to shift the responsibility for his fall on feminine shoulders. The cry of the primal Adam welled in his coward heart, eager to appear blameless before his pinchbeck gods: "The woman tempted me!"

"It's all on a par with your usual carelessness," he reprimanded her bitterly. "You would have involved both of us in a pretty scandal if this thing had fallen into anybody else's hands but McAllister's." He gave her the summary,

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with the marginal notes in her handwriting, that Bruce had handed him a while ago.

"He's the most magnanimous of men, anyway."

"The cur!" he exclaimed.

"Sydney!" she objected.

He was willing to praise Bruce to himself, but his mean spirit acting unconsciously, objected to having him praised by this woman, loved ardently by him once, whom he wished now to discard. It was as if the smouldering embers of his passion for her were breaking into a faint flame of jealousy, to be extinguished no sooner than kindled.

"Your attack on him in the Senate was brutal. I deprecate it. I think, no matter how it may hurt to have me say so, it was unwarranted. He is the most magnanimous among men."

"He may be—I have no desire to bandy words—if he is, go to him."

"What do you mean, Sydney?" Her large face was crimson with shame and just rage.

"My meaning ought to be plain enough."

"It is brutally plain. It is unworthy of you! I did not come to hold you to your promise of marriage. If you would part from me, do so in a way that may not humiliate either of us to look back upon."

"I made no promise," he replied curtly.

"The insult is double." The mirrors repeating the marble columns in endless vistas showed her scarlet. "Only a coward would say so!"

"I have had enough of this!" He arose as a thing hissing.

"And I! It turns my heart sick." She lifted herself from the leather lounge, regal in a certain queenliness of despair. The man in the woman was never more uppermost.

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"I can stand everything, I can forgive everything but cowardice. It is not for me to boast; but I risked my honor, my future, my very life for you, and now that we failed together you are neither brave nor noble enough to stand with me."

"I am in no mood to bandy words."

"To defend your honor rather, Sydney."

"Care would become you, Georgia."

"I don't see why. I have lost all; I have nothing further to lose. Everything that made my life worth the living is gone from me." She stood as one gazing far out at a sea receding with the wreckage of the ship that has carried one to shores thronged with blissful memories. There passed over her large intellectual face a look so determined, so somber, that his craven soul proved too weak to fulfil at once its own cruel resolution, and he said:

"Let us part as friends, anyway."

"You are satirical," she laughed, and in her laugh there was the bitterness of death. She turned to go, feeling that she had left all her life behind her in that cold bemarbled room, hoping that he would recall her with a word of endearment; but he was fearful of exposing himself longer to the eyes of ever-watchful gossip and he reëntered the Senate.

A second afterwards she caught the reflection of Inez in the mirror, and mistaking the reflection for the real Inez she gave a start of surprise.

"Ah, Georgia!" Inez stood beside her. She noticed the pallor of Georgia's face, the drawn expression, the unwonted lines furrowed as by the sudden rolling down of tears. She checked herself midway in startled expression.

"You await Senator McAllister, I know," and without staying for an answer Georgia used Bruce's name as the open sesame to throw wide open to Inez's view her admiration

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for him. She pronounced him the most magnanimous of men, a hero in a workaday unromantic world ungraced by them. Twice he had held her honor in his hands and twice he had restored it untarnished.

Before Inez had recovered from the suddenness of that strange outburst of confidence, the golden Georgia went on: "I ridiculed him to you, Inez. I tried to belittle him in your eyes. I can only now ask pardon in my name and his. He is a man among men." There was a nervous tremor in her voice, a slight trembling of the sensitive lips, and then, like one afraid to trust more to speech, she stooped to kiss Inez and, stammering out an excuse, was gone.

In the outer corridor she encountered Bruce about to make his way into the marble room to meet Inez. She hailed him and he advanced to speak to her. "Inez awaits you," she said.

"Yes, I know. I got her card, but I was delayed a second."

"Again I have to thank you for your generosity. A second time you have put me everlastingly in your debt."

"The debt is so small that I can cancel it now and lose nothing."

"It makes my own debt all the greater."

He shifted the subject; she held him to it, pouring forth her gratitude with a warmth and a spontaneity that embarrassed him. Reaction from the base ingratitude of Shaw, gnawing like a serpent's tooth, may have prompted it.

"I said harsh things of you."

"I may have deserved them."

She shook her head sadly and she seemed so steeped in wretchedness that he pitied her profoundly with all his infinite sympathy for those who suffered. He doubted not that she had forsaken now all hope of becoming Shaw's wife

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and his quick intuition told him that their affair had been ruptured by a lovers' quarrel. On his part, none the less, delicacy commanded silence.

"I must go now; I have been delayed too long," said Georgia, and somehow even these commonplace words seemed to Bruce to be drenched in tears; and she went on hastily, excitedly, as if it were something she had been long meaning to say and must say it now: "Inez awaits you; go to her. She is in love with you. You are blind, not to have seen it long ago."

She turned precipitately and swept on her way, leaving him with a confused sense of his pity for her and astonishment at this whirl of words that she had so impulsively scattered behind her. Hastening into the marble room he found Inez gone; there was a heavier feeling around his heart and the shadows deepened on his face.

Why Inez left, ceding to the masterful mood of the moment, it would have been impossible for even Inez herself to have told. It might have been the protest of her femininity against the intrusion of Georgia; it might have been the reawakening of harsher sentiments, but whatever the reason a long time elapsed before Bruce McAllister was destined to hear from her lips how bitterly she resented Shaw's diatribe against him.

CHAPTER XV

GEORGIA'S DEPARTURE

WHEN Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck reached home she hastened to her room, locked the doors, and threw herself at full length on the couch. Her breast heaved; her large intellectual face was white with pain. Her complete overthrow had come that day! Shaw had broken with her finally and irrevocably! He had become all in all to her while she to him had become a trifle outworn. The moral sacrifice she had made voluntarily in his behalf, her unwilling treachery to her father, bound her to Shaw the closer, since remorse for her sins was sure to be severer when she was abandoned by him for whom they had been committed.

Conscience is sometimes an obliging creditor, but it will demand its last penny of dues in the end. Her strong, masculine intellect, born to think independently, had put her in rebellion against the conventions set for her sex, while her feminine nature, loving to be foremost in the very society that laid down these so arbitrary and rigorous laws, forced her to bow a submissive knee in public to what her private life spurned. Her divided nature, her double life were constantly in clash, and the tragedy of her existence was outlined in advance for her with a Grecian fatality.

She took all her suffering with a certain masculine stoicism, suppressing her groans with clenched fists, her white

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teeth biting into the soft flesh of her underlip, her eyes glassy but tearless.

At seven the call came for dinner, and not long thereafter the man rapped at the door. She answered in a low voice that she was suffering from a nervous headache and wished to be excused. No, she cared for nothing; not even tea. She begged not to be disturbed.

She arose and, walking over to the window, rested her arms on the sill and looked out. Her long hair, uncoiled and disheveled, falling in a shower of gold to her waist, blew disregarded in her face and her eyes. The dusk sank away, as if to find rest in the lap of the earth. Slowly the roof tops of the government buildings in the Mall dwindled from view, as if they, too, were seeking solace under the sheltering tent of the night. The darkness fell softly as sleep itself over tired Washington. Rest was for all things save her.

The night marched forth in all its majestic somberness. At the end of the street, sloping upward, the electric lights twinkled watchfully from the White House porticoes. Over the serene abode the high stark Ionic columns stood at vigilance, like grim, impassable guards. Her ambition had sought to enter these auspicious portals and been repulsed repeatedly—killed finally. Her life, broken hearted, choked with tears, gazed on the slain one, bleeding there. Somber and more somber with the deepening blackness grew her mood. The warm winds, fluttering like the silks of a fairy presence, seemed to her to sob out the infinite sadness of the world.

The stars came forth, beaming and dancing with pristine vigor and joy, careless of life's manifold misery that called up to them from the earth below. The city was lapped in silence, broken only by the steady, monotonous click-clack

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of the horses' hoofs on the asphalt pavement. From the circle across the way the odor of hyacinths stole into her room like faint music. She was alone in the world—she and her sorrow!

The peculiar mysterious happiness that sometimes springs from grief, the luxury of pitying oneself when the soul is wrenched in twain and one half of it weeps for the other, was no longer for her. She had passed that stage; her whole being was steeped in misery. She moaned aloud, her face white as if her sobs were drawing the very blood from her lips. Her forehead sank on her arms; then she lifted her eyes and they traveled in the direction of the obelisk—the huge, stern sentinel of the night on which she had looked so often in such varying moods. She could discern its white, gaunt outlines standing there like some ghostly figure arisen out of the past. Her mind centered on it, her whirling thoughts concentrated, and her whole life moved before her in review.

She fell to wondering what her mother was like, this strange, enigmatical woman who died while her daughter was still an infant, of whom Georgia had heard but little—a bit here when her uncommunicative father was in one mood, a bit there when he was in quite another. This brooding over her mother, this fanciful construction of her character and personality had its peculiar charms for her at moments when remorse or distress was uppermost. Flashes as of another life, of soul transmigration, would quiver through her, and this being created by her imagination would stand before her clothed in flesh, vitalized by blood; and elusive phrases, indistinct and hazy, that she had heard spoken sometime, somewhere, by her mother's lips, would flit through her mind.

What was the mystery that surrounded her mother's

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end? How had she quit the world? Death? Suicide? Georgia's whole body shuddered, her muscles contracting tensely. By some process of reasoning, illogical and without basis, resting on a stray hint, caught from she remembered not where, she reached the conclusion that her mother's death had come by her own hand. The gloomy, morbid thought thrilled responsive chords. "She must have suffered like me, we must have been alike," she sobbed, as if pitying her mother rather than herself.

In the church on the opposite corner the choir was rehearsing, and through the open door the solemn roll of the organ and the chant of voices traveled like the perfume of the hyacinth through the May night to her. The music startled her at first; she had been lost so inextricably in the dark, drear cavern of her own thoughts that she had not heard a note of it until the moment when the swelling sounds of the chorus had burst in a wave on her consciousness; perhaps the door had been shut; maybe the singing had been softer, the playing lower. She resented it as an intrusion; it grated on her like harsh and fretting noises, and she arose to close her window, when the music ceased and only the steady click-clack of the horses' hoofs on the asphalt disturbed the silence. She arose and walked restlessly up and down the dark room, moaning to herself disconsolately. What was her life to be now? What had it ever been? Her insatiable ambition had succeeded only in embittering her father's existence, in making him the plaything for discontent until the end of his days. She loved him with all her deep masculine-feminine capabilities for love, and his devotion to her had been the undoing of his happiness. Her divorce had sullied his good name with the mud of scandal! She had made an unholy compact with his arch enemy! She had been false to him who was ready to sacrifice all for

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her! She had put herself and his pride into the hands of the man whom he hated most of all men on earth! If the sorry tale ever leaked out—and her despondency whispered that become public property it would and must—it would crack that stoic heart. It was hard even now to look into those severe, glowering eyes of his, but supposing all should become known and he should call her to face him? She preferred the unanswerability of death!

She dragged herself to the window and sank down on her knees. Evening after evening she had sat in this same alcove to watch the sun set over Georgetown, when through the gold-shot mists her imagination made the hills take on the loftiness of mountains and scale tier on tier to the clouds. Often and often she had seen the skies flush in a glory of color, and one by one she had beheld the brilliant shades grow faint and die out, engulfed at last in the swarthy of the night, and it occurred to her that all the joy and brightness and color that youth lent her life had been fading with a like swiftness, swallowed finally in the blackness of this one supreme sorrow.

But on the morrow did not the sun arise again, the darkness go down before it? She smiled forlornly, refusing to delude herself with false comparisons, pushed to an absurdity. Her youth was dead, murdered by him who could have saved, and it never would rise again.

She looked down on the area below, faintly lit by the reflection from the lamp that was held by the bronze figure of the flying Mercury that stood on the steps outside. She leaned far out, gazing down, down as if into an abyss. She shut her eyes. The warm winds were chill to her hot cheeks. She was giddy. Her brain reeled. The odor of the hyacinths was as intoxicating as the bouquet of strong wines. She felt her hold on the window frame relax, as if her will,

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acting in response to another will stronger than its own, were loosening her clasp. Her feet lifted themselves from the floor, her gaze fascinated by something far, far below that her reeling mind failed to comprehend. She suppressed a cry, rather her dizzy heart tore it from her lips. Horrified by what she did, yet did not wish to do, she let go.

CHAPTER XVI

R. R. DISAPPEARS

ROSSITER REMBRANDT DICKINSON deserted his friends and acquaintances as entirely and suddenly as he has these chronicles for a long time. He locked his studio doors one night, shortly after his last conversation with Elaine, slipped the keys in his pocket, and many a long day passed before his squat body and fierce face were seen in the Cavern of Despair again. Not a soul had been taken into his confidence, and consequently those who wished to find out where he was had no means at all of learning. On his door he pasted the notice: "R. R. Dickinson begs to inform his patrons and the public that he will be gone from here on business for some time. Date of return uncertain." It was as if the grotesques he had sketched in the corners of the sign were four R. R.'s, in various moods of merriment, grinning at himself as he wrote.

The numerous patrons and the great public to which he appealed in his fantastic declaration of absence were in reality no other than that one individual—Miss Elaine McAllister. It was nobody else's business, he told himself, whether he went away or stayed at home, and in so far as Elaine was concerned it mattered not where he went, since go he must and miss him she would, he might as well be in one place as another; besides, he was by no means certain as to his destination or the length of his departure.

R. R. decided only, with great reluctance, that he was

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deeply in love, that he was unhappy beyond his power of expression; that if he confessed his passion to its object he might either be laughed at or accepted, and he was as much panic-stricken by one alternative as the other. "An artist," he reasoned out in his calmer moments, "has no business to be married; he wants to be as unfettered as the winds; if he's loaded down with petty worries and small household cares, it's good-by to art. Make up your mind one way or the other: divorce yourself from your painting and take a wife unto yourself or remain a bachelor and wedded to your art." Then came a moment of temptation and he was for flinging down his brushes, rushing upstairs to Elaine and declaring his eternal devotion. He saw but one way out of the dread predicament—flight; and to strengthen this conclusion there was the fact that he had funds in hand and that he was running short of material to finish his great American series of ten, and a glimpse of the new life of the West might furnish him with needed suggestions and inspiration. He would go, return and conquer himself. He wanted to say good-by to Elaine, that being only just and right; but he feared lest a formal farewell might plunge him into the very danger he was struggling to avoid, and so with his usual tact and dexterity he hit upon the aforesaid sign as a way out of the difficulty. How in the world Elaine was to know that the notice was written for her benefit, unless by intuition or witchcraft, is something that probably escaped his consideration—he was too excited at the time to think.

R. R. left his environment behind and started toward Denver, but his trouble accompanied him every foot of the way, with just as comfortable and easy an air as if it had been invited and were heartily welcome; Elaine filled his thoughts as much a thousand miles away from her as that pale and frail young lady did when she was just over his

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head; and the result of this of course was, either fortunately or unfortunately, that his journey was a rank failure, that he was wretched and ill at ease, in no mood to heed or see the hundred and one subjects for paintings that stretched out their hands to him from everywhere; and in turn the result of this was, of course, that he started homeward long before the number of days allotted for his journey was over.

On his return to Washington he played what may be termed a game of hide-and-seek with Elaine; he slipped into his studio early of mornings and never left at night until he had made sure that she was out of sight, groaning most of the time at the torture and the penance he imposed on himself. Elaine, meanwhile, was distressed at his strange conduct, and she all but worried herself into sickness by imaging the faults she might have committed to hurt him.

And so the case stood in Cupid's court until one fine morning in May of the long session when R. R. threw his windows wide open to let the balmy air into his musty studio; to R. R.'s sensitive nostrils the atmosphere was as laden with warm and strong odors as if Washington had been turned into a vast garden of flowers; and his quick ears fairly could hear the bursting of pod and bud, the unfolding of leaf, the roar of awakened life, the hum of beautiful industry that the warm, virile, Southern spring inspired in nature's workshop. In the small garden of the Navy building across the street the pink flowers of the magnolia had opened suddenly, as if by a magician's touch, into their full pink and white bloom. His own blood flowed faster, his heart beats were more rapid; he, too, was under the spell of the season, his energies resurrected to the new life of the year. He picked up his brushes at length, and knitting his brows he set to work resolutely—an operation that for a long time had been attended with no degree of success. "By God! I can't stand this any

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longer!" he cried as suddenly as irrelevantly. "It's killing me! I ain't agoing to stand it any longer! I'm going upstairs—that settles it. And such a little woman, too!"

He waddled up the dingy staircase, muttering, scolding himself, puffing, panting, like a curmudgeon on his way to discharge a debt, looking once or twice as if he would like to turn back, but prodding himself on again with his own choice selection of harsh epithets. He pushed the door of Elaine's studio open slightly, thrust in his shaggy head, the ridge of eyebrow jutting fiercely, and he said in a voice so low that it was ridiculous—his whole attitude promised to shout and one heard but a whisper—"Woman alive, I'm back!"

"I've known that for almost a month," remarked Elaine, trying hard to hide the evidences of her shock of surprise.

"I've been meaning to run up to see you, but the fact is—the fact is—" He paused, wagged his head, interrupting himself with: "That's a fine bit you are at work on there, grand—I admire it mightily. It's a neat idea—your young woman bent double in serious study, holding a light over her book—very neat indeed. You know me, I'm not the kind of a man to praise a thing I don't like."

"Yes, indeed I know you," said Elaine going on with her work, as if quite indifferent to his presence. "But you didn't finish explaining what the facts were that you wanted to use to excuse your negligence."

"That's true, I didn't, did I? I've been busy, awful busy—on something secret—no one's to know what it's about until it's done and settled one way or the other."

"Poor boy!" she said in mock pity, "what was that dreadful incubus?"

"Oh, nothing," he answered vaguely, as if he had been suffering from some mystery, the burden of which he was

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condemned to bear in silence and alone, and then he burst out suddenly, in a manner more native to him; "Elaine, Miss Elaine—Miss McAllister, I mean; women are different than men; they're entirely different; they don't realize it; but they are. The point is just here, when a man's in trouble he wants everybody to leave him alone; when a woman's in trouble she won't leave anybody alone. Don't you see?" He stopped and stammered over some incoherent phrases, feeling that the harder he tried to lift himself out of the quagmire the deeper he sank into it.

Elaine laughed despite her resolution to remain cold, reserved and distant—Rossiter Rembrandt was too absurd, too impossible; one could not take the man seriously. Surely he was a rare bird, not classified in any ornithology and one to be considered in his own way or not at all.

"Come," he pleaded earnestly, "don't quarrel with me; I'm at fault, I'll acknowledge, but there's a good reason for it, believe me. I'll explain it in due time and maybe you will agree with me. Don't say that I assume too much in supposing that it is so important to you; I know very well it isn't." His voice sank lower; his rugged face softened, and her resolves became gentler with his own compelling gentleness. His moods affected her as the weather does the thermometer.

"And it's such a beautiful morning," he chuckled. "Have you looked out of your window? Haven't you heard the call of the song of spring? It seems to me that if I were locked in jail to-day, I'd break the bars to get out or go crazy. Did you notice the magnolias across the way—even they couldn't stay in this morning. Nothing can. The whole world is swimming in sunshine. It is sacrilege not to get out a bit and worship nature. I think too much of you to let you put yourself in danger of being excommunicated

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from the mother church, so I come to take you out of this unholy cell and offer a jaunt. What do you say? Your young lady in clay won't stir from her book until you get back; maybe she'll behave better afterwards if you leave her in peace now. Besides, it's miserly not to give one day out of the three hundred and sixty-five to the year that gives us all of them. Don't say no."

"How can I," she smiled, "in the face of such unusual eloquence? Where shall it be?"

R. R. grinned, pleased as a schoolboy at the compliment. "Where to?" he asked. "There's the river—we can float along to Mount Vernon or we can take the car to Cabin-John's Bridge; or——"

"Cabin-John's Bridge; I haven't been there yet and I'd like to go."

"That suits me better, too. I was half afraid you would say Mount Vernon. All this sentimental drolling over dead men's graves makes me sick; and besides the poets and politicians——" he cut himself short. "Yes, we'll make it Cabin-John's."

In the trolley car that whirled them toward their destination he sat in silence most of the while, tranquil and happy, pleased with himself and satisfied with the world. Now and then he gave a low chuckle—at what it is to be doubted if he knew himself. Elaine chattered on gayly, feeling as if a heavy weight had fallen from her shoulders suddenly, rejoiced to have that mixture of the rough and the sterling which was R. R. with her again.

"It must have snowed dogwood last night," she commented, drawing in long whiffs of the delicate fragrance and pointing to the high white banks of the flower that loomed like drifts of unsmutched snow out of the vivid green woods and thickets.

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"Clever girl!" he exclaimed to himself as if he had just discovered that fact; "very clever! Clever about everything. Just the woman for me; she would make just the wife for me. We could manage to pull through, I think. I might have to paint more pot-boilers; but we could manage it, I guess. I don't see why we couldn't. We should have to, that's all. I'm going to ask her before we get back, as sure as my name is Rossiter Rembrandt Dickinson. She may say no; but what of it? It'll hurt, but it won't kill. She may say yes; I'm inclined to think that she will say yes. Why shouldn't she say yes to a man like me? I was a fool not to have asked her up in the studio before we started; I can't reel off an eloquent speech like that every minute. If it's going to be yes or no, it might as well be at one time as another. So it might! What a fool I am anyway. Why in heaven must a man make himself miserable over a woman? And over a pale little woman to boot. I used to scoff at it; I used to laugh at it; and now my wrists are tied by a pair of apron strings. I suppose it's punishment; no, it's arranged that way. A woman turns the world topsy-turvy, a man sets things right again, and the struggle between the sexes keeps the world moving. That's the way I figure it out, anyway."

The scenic beauties, minor and subdued, the surpassing glory of the morning came to him only as sounds in the street to one seated in a theater and lost in the play. The lordly Potomac, forced here and there to confine itself to narrow channels, roared out again at its bars disdainfully, boiled and seethed, and lashed its eddies into foam, and threw itself headlong against the high rocks that dared to face its current and challenge its way. Between the conduit road and the river the yellowish waters of the lock canal dozed in the warm weather as oblivious as R. R. himself to the upheaval

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of life, the crackling of germination in the earth and the air. On the farther shore the sheer gray bluffs scarred and seamed by blasting, lifted on high one solid mass of green tree and vine leaves, not unlike a battle-worn army carrying so many new banners.

The long pleasant ride was over all too soon for Elaine, who had fairly reveled in the variation that every twist and turn in the road spread to view. They dismounted from the car and sauntered toward the ornamental steel bridge that crossed the deep glen and ran over to the grounds of the hotel. He paused there a moment and swung his short arm out from his dumpy figure. "That's what I call building, architecture, magnificence!" he exclaimed, pointing, not a stone's throw away, to the span of the graceful arch and the long sweep of solid masonry of Cabin-John's Bridge. A swollen creek bubbled lustily beneath it and the high slender sycamores pushed above its top.

"Yes," agreed Elaine, "but you shake your arm at the bridge as if you wished to hurl it over."

"Clever of you; very clever of you," he chuckled.

"I don't see why," objected she.

"Not that remark in particular, perhaps; but then very clever in general—at least that's the way I reckon it out."

"I suppose that's a pretty fine compliment coming from you, R. R.; but why in the world must you reckon it out?"

"Did I say anything about reckoning it out?" He blushed. "Well, the truth is, I'm confused this morning; all turned around about something or other. I'm used to working, you see; working every day of my life. I never stop for holidays—I work all the time. That's what we're put here for—work! Holidays are just for lazy, shiftless, good-for-nothing people, that's what I think. Well, as I

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started to say, quitting work to-day and getting out of the grooves of habit has kind of upset me."

Elaine laughed aloud at the logic, clumsy and crude as the perpetrator of it, that made good-for-nothings out of him and of her.

He was ashamed of something, and he did not know exactly what it was, and his shame, his indecision, and his anger wrought havoc with him. He rolled over himself awkwardly in argument this morning, much as his head went over his heels on that fatal day when he tumbled off the car. There were seconds when he dared to believe that she knew the cause of all of it.

They loitered on through the grounds, passed the merry-go-rounds and the scenic railway and the bandstand and summer pavilions—he snorted out something or other against man's vilification of pleasant prospects—and they strolled on to the generous veranda of the hotel, whither they repaired for luncheon.

"Let's have our fried chicken al fresco," he said, selecting a table on the south side of the open porch that peered through the cool green of the trees and out on the shimmering waters of the Potomac. He ordered enough for four from the astonished waiter—it would have been for six had not Elaine stopped him in time—and when the food came he scarcely touched it, giving some far-fetched excuse. He sat in absolute silence, playing with his knife and fork, looking all the time as if he were on the point of bursting out into a long discourse.

After their repast he suggested with unwonted mildness, as if she were actually entitled to a voice in it, that they walk out toward Great Falls on the shaded conduit road, but barely were they on their way before another idea laid hold of him and he asked: "How would it be if we take this little

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path and go down to the old canal? There's the lock keeper's shanty just to one side of it, and it lends a human note to the picturesque surroundings. Nature is all right in its way, but I like it best when it serves as a background for man. Millet made the right use of it according to my ideas."

"You don't seem to like anything just for its own sake," she answered, "just because it is beautiful or pleasing or soothing; but with you everything must give an excuse for its existence. It must serve a purpose."

"Well, maybe I do, and maybe I don't, what's the use of arguing and arguing? I don't believe in arguing, do you?"

"No," she smiled, "not with you."

"Not with me! Why not with me? You must pardon my saying so, but you make me out a bear, a wolf, a savage; as if I wanted to eat people when they dared to contradict me, and I'm not that way at all, and you know it. I'm too pliable; too meek! I don't assert myself enough, that's the trouble with me—lack of self assertion! I have tried to overcome it, to conquer it; but what's the use? It's no use at all; a man is made the way he's made; and if he's made right, it's all right, and if he's made wrong, God help him; he can't do a thing for himself."

"I don't agree with that, R. R."

"I know you don't. I expected that in advance. Who does agree with me on anything? No one does! I suppose I'm all wrong and others are all right. It frightens me sometimes. I wake up with a start and think: 'Here, here, Rositer Rembrandt Dickinson, you're a lunatic; it can't be possible that you can disagree with the whole world and be sane.' It's awful to feel that way. I wish I could change myself."

His evident nervousness passed into an agitation that was

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quite as plain. He arose from where they were seated, bent his fat body and picked up sticks and stones and turf, with face as grim as if he were a Titan bent on pulling up the earth to hurl it at the sky, and he sent them splashing into the sleepy waters of the canal.

"Hi!" he shouted, suddenly dropping down at her side, "there's old Charon coming out of his Hades to let the boats pass. Quite a character, I'll wager. An odd, old figure! I wonder if he grew here; I wonder if he ever left this spot. It would make a picture." He shut his eyes and puckered his brows as if he wished to impress the scene deeply on his memory. "I touched the button," he said after a second, "and I've got the picture, details and all. Capital!"

A boat laden with grain for the mills of Georgetown was being hauled down the stream by a mule that stepped indolently along the narrow towpath, urged on with but little effect by the stick of a white-haired, hatless negro—"the uncle" and his garments were apparently of the same age. Elaine and R. R. lapsed into silence, watching Charon open the lock-gates idly to let the yellow water drift into the chamber. The whole scene seemed a revival of the easy-going ante-bellum days of the old South that has passed quite away.

"If there were only locks to lift us over our difficulties," he thought. "I haven't considered this thing seriously enough. Not half. I tell you marriage is a big leap, like jumping from one world into another. Exactly! And besides she hasn't given me any chance to approach the subject; not a word of encouragement. A woman ought to do her share. If she cares for a man she ought to show it; that's all there is about it! It's as important for her as for me—every bit."

The flour boat, with its charger and guardian, was hid-

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den from sight; the lock shut again, the keeper returned to his house, and the two were left undisturbed, the master and mistress of their own little world.

"Life is a strange thing," he commented.

"I've heard that before," she smiled.

"I know! I know!" puffed R. R. waving his short thick arm in front of him; then—after a bit—"marriage is a strange thing, too—very." He bent his gaze on the ground, ostensibly considering the ways of an ant.

"Oh, very," she blushed.

"Eh? Do you think it strange?"

"Oh, very," she repeated.

He prodded into the soft soil with a twig, caught between the rollers of conflicting thoughts. "I've broken the ice; I've gone far enough for a while. Better stop here and think it over, R. R.; you can't go back if you go forward another inch. By the living rock, this is an awful piece of business."

Elaine's heart beat quicker and quicker, and her nerves twitched; he had wrought her into a very fever of expectancy, while he was now calmly engaged in an almost chemical analysis of his sensations.

"I see that Charon rents boats and fishing tackle; it might be pleasant to take a little junket on the river." Thus he shoved the engrossing theme away by sheer force.

"I have no doubt that it would," she assented, feeling that her emotions, like herself, had been dragged from one place to another.

And so, almost before they were aware of it, what with their rowing and fishing and walking and their fragmentary conversation pushed between, the afternoon vanished, the shadows lengthened, the sun sank and the daylight dwindled into the dusk.

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On the way homeward, when the electric car whirled them through the darkness, he lifted himself out of the depression into which he had let himself sink to remark: "You'll be returning to Chicago soon, almost any day now; and I didn't get a chance to talk on the serious subject we started."

"On what was that?" Her pale face flushed and she could hear the beat of her heart above the whirr of the flying wheels.

The bars above R. R.'s eyes ridged and deepened. "Don't you know?"

"We talked about so many things," she pleaded.

"Yes, that's so," he assented gloomily, plunging back into the depths of quiet, muttering to himself inwardly, "That's the way of it; that's all the encouragement I get;" and then, with what he considered a remarkable adroitness, he changed the topic of conversation for the final time.

When he left Elaine at the door of her apartment house in Iowa Circle and parted with her for the night, he waddled along Thirteenth Street to Franklin Square and stumbled over to a bench in the darkness. A half hour passed; then an hour; and he seemed as oblivious to the flight of time as if he had decided to camp there for the night. Finally the cold and the dampness touched his marrow, arousing him from his lethargy like the thump from a policeman's club. He arose slowly and unwillingly, muttering to himself: "I'm an ass; a hopeless ass, without even enough sense to bray at the right time. Was there ever a man like me?"

Was there?

CHAPTER XVII

CHARITY AND JUSTICE

TO my mind, Senator McAllister," said Anthony, "poverty is not the problem you would make of it. Leave it alone and in time it will take care of itself. Meanwhile, you had better put on an apron and enjoy the delights of humility. There is nothing like it! I can recommend it to everybody."

So by ignoring it did Sir Anthony solve the problem of poverty at the Convent of the Little Sisters of the Poor on the occasion when fashion and diplomacy covered their broadcloths and silks to wait on the dependent ones. In the plain dining room the paupers were already seated, intent on their fare, graced with unusual luxuries, paying small heed to the mighty who had humbled themselves to serve.

Bruce was about to reply in a jocular vein when Addison Hammersmith, in evident search for somebody, stumbled into the anteroom where Bruce and Anthony were conversing. "Is that you, old fellow?" said Addison, espying Bruce and coming forward to shake hands with him. "Well, upon my word, I didn't expect to find you here. Ruth pulled me into it. Have you seen her anywhere? Between us, I think the thing is a humbug. What the poor want, according to my idea, is to be given plenty of grub and be left alone while they're eating it."

A moment afterwards Addison vanished, taking with him the aproned Sir Anthony, who was trying to enjoy the sen-

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sation of poverty the way most men would like to enjoy the sensation of riches. The sight of Addison, naturally recalling Inez, whom he had come hither in the hopes of seeing, set Bruce's heart to beating quicker. A long sojourn in New York and the envious months, as if at the command of the sprite aforesaid, held Bruce and Inez apart; and even the great god Chance, on whom separated lovers are wont to rely for the meeting that shall lead to a reconciliation, had not intervened in their behalf; and as the days of the long session dwindled on and on toward a hurried close, despair seized him and laid a heavy hand on her.

But in some page of the book of love which is kept, they say, by a mischievous, blundering blind man, it was written that these two should meet, and had it not been so written who is there to say they should not have met after all? At any rate, be these things as they may, Inez seeking the unstable Addison entered that anteroom, saw Bruce and took a startled step backward; and he, seeing her, remained where he was, confused and at a loss to find the phrases he had coined to honor this very occasion. And she might have gone on her way and he might have stood where he was, and they might have remained as far apart as if sundered by the seas, had they not advanced together and clasped hands, and had she not said to him, missing a better phrase:

"You here!"

"Evidently," he replied, conscious of an inward trembling.

"But you are not cast for a part! I couldn't imagine your so being. What brings you here?" Her eyes fastened on him as if to pierce all the changes that the months had made in him; she discovered none.

"The hope of seeing you. And you?" There was a heart beat in his voice.

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"Accident," she answered, the pink encroaching on the ivory of her cheeks, and then she went on hastily, "and you don't approve of it?" She wondered if the uneven tones of her voice were as perceptible to him as to her.

Should Democracy, given a chance to grow eloquent before Love, eager for its words after a long separation, remain silent? He inveighed against an arrangement of men's lives that made necessary the constant appeal to Charity, who degraded and humbled even while she gave, conscious that the necessity for her giving wronged the name she bore. He believed that when Justice swayed the world Charity would leave poverty out of its benign realms.

Every time one charitable institution was built our conditions multiplied the necessity for ten more; therefore it was the part of wisdom to obliterate the shameful disease, the bestial overwork, the savage exploitation of the weak by the strong, the fear of want that shattered the lives and health of men, rather than to go on and on treating superficial symptoms, results ever, causes never. When each man and woman did his and her share of the world's work and co-operation supplanted caste, when waste was eliminated and the hours of labor supplying the needs of man were reduced to three, then would a life rich and full and magnificently free throw open all the long-closed storehouses of nature and of art to all the sons and all the daughters of men.

And while he spoke, the aged dependents, bent and crippled by time, were timidly eyeing their plutocratic hosts and diplomats surrounded by the artistry of exquisite toilets, combining their sensuous tones as when an artist in an absent moment plies his palette recklessly and hits by accident upon a happy effect that leaves its carefully wrought-out efforts far behind. The hum of voices engaged in trifling conversation, the light laughter attended upon quick wit,

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the passing of harmless retorts and easy compliment whirled like so many electric fans to drive out the air musty with unsavory alms.

And amidst the contrast of the strange festivity, Sisters of the Poor, pale, timid and subdued, were moving softly in and out of the little chapel and the various adjoining rooms, appearing in the crowded corridors as if merely to lend the strong contrast of their somber black garments to the tones of prevailing brilliancy, vanishing from it as if religion impersonated were out of place amid worldliness personified.

The silent going and gentle coming of these sisters reminded one of the movements of the black-robed figures, nuns, monks and friars from some middle-age cathedral clock, whose momentary entrance is but to proclaim the flight of time, and to suggest the vanity and the transitoriness of human existence; while the gathering of the aristocratic reminded one of the crowds in the street that look up at the automaton, wonder for a second or two at the complicated and peculiar machinery that gives them life, and then straightway forget their existence until the next hour when the images march out of their dark caverns to announce their warning presence once more.

Others flitting through the room where Bruce and Inez stood interrupted their conversation constantly, forcing it to change its course, and they passed from one theme to another, circling around but never touching the subject that lay nearest their hearts, until he said, boldly, filling a pause to suit his purposes, all his pulses afire:

"I thought you had all but forgotten me."

And she answered gently, her voice love-tempered: "You must have known better. Trust a woman never to forget."

"Wanted to forget me," he amended.

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She looked in silence, fearful of herself, of his easy conquest, out of the window on the panorama of Washington that spread before her; on the white dome of the Capitol, sparkling in the sunlight as if hewn out of crystal; on the low dome of the library, flashing like a ball of gold that turned in the strong light of the sun.

He repeated his question, his tones softer.

"I thought I wanted to forget you," she answered.

"When?"

"Ah, you know."

"And you still think I was wrong to have refused you?" he asked.

"I shouldn't have refused you—I don't think I should have."

"But if you had you would have found me more forgiving."

Her long lashes dropped over her brown eyes. "Perhaps I was harsher than—than I should have been." Her voice caught; she sought the view from the window.

"I thought so."

"The excitement of the moment, my position—and you'll admit it was difficult—carried me away. I said things I shouldn't have said; I said things I really didn't mean."

"But all this time you have left me to suffer the results of your injustice and you never once hinted to me your regrets. It was cruel of you!" The memory of suffering endured made him harden his heart for a second. The sprite grinned.

"But I made the effort to let you know, and you knew that I had made it and you let my effort pass unrecognized." A tender note crept into her voice; her eyes were less hard. The sprite held his breath.

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“When was that?” he asked, astonished.

“When! On the day your bill passed the Senate, after Shaw made his attack on you.”

“But when I came in the marble room you had left.”

“But you must have known why I came!”

He stood aghast before the inconsequential obstacle that had threatened to wreck their happiness, but now that a phrase or two had swept it to one side he was conscious only of being with her again, of moving on with her again, while it dwindled away into nothingness.

“And the friendship that you said could not continue?” His voice throbbed; his eyes now, as if her answer were a thing to be seen and not heard, looked without.

“I have already answered that. You must have known I could not have meant it. You were cruel to have given such importance to a word spoken in—” memory, impartial to lovers, flayed her now with the recollection of miseries endured.

“How could I have known?”

“By your intuition—you used to boast about its reliability.” Pride, humbled by its too easy surrender, strained against the manacles.

“I have been punished by my boastfulness.” The look that swept across his swarthy face vouchsafed for the truth in his words. “Is our friendship to continue?”

“Do you wish it?” She faltered, her eyes luminous as with tears.

He was about to ask how life for him could continue without it, when the murmur of confused words and light laughter echoed behind him, and turning he beheld that Venus, unwilling, had filled the room with a detached group of men and women. He was alive to the fact, too, that they had outstayed the time allotted by discretion, and he took care

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in so far as he could to make himself a part of the peculiar entertainment instead of holding himself aloof from it.

Half an hour afterwards he walked outside of the convent walls and strolled rapidly toward the Capitol. The Supreme Court was to listen that afternoon to arguments leveled against the constitutionality of the Child-Labor law and Bruce was anxious to see how the shafts would strike the target at which they were being aimed.

He hastened through the rotunda and passed the effigies of the nation's glorious ones confined to the niches of this Valhalla, and so made his way into the austere hall, grave as the spirit of the law that solemnly brooded over its destinies. A screen of Ionic columns, hewn out of Potomac marble, made the background for the Supreme bench where sat enthroned the nine justices, facing the low-domed semi-circular room, all its lines disciplined to a fine Grecian severity and a noble chastity.

For the plaintiff, a Georgia cotton manufacturer—terrible ogre of the miracle story of modern industry!—there spoke one of the lawyers admired by the nation whose name legal history may regret some day to associate with a cause so poor. Silvery was his mustache, silvery his hair and silvery his voice, although that voice, like his gestures, was held in sober restraint, as if feeling were out of place in logic's mansion, inhospitable to the emotions.

Democracy, sensitively aware of its swarthy hue and ugly countenance, examined these nine faces, all of them good to look on, venerable, conscious of accomplishment, marked for their own by acumen and intellectuality—these democracy examined closely and felt itself out of place, for what singular reason it knew not itself. But casting our mind far back in these uneventful chronicles, and remembering democracy's

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impatience with modern law, let us be more patient with its discomfort in the tabernacle of it.

Bruce's glittering eyes singled out Justice Addams, whose iron mane fell challengingly on his square military shoulders, and whose determined countenance looked invincible as destiny, wise as its decrees, and held him, as it were, in the hollow of his hand and put him under the microscope of his fear while he recalled those words that Inez spoke of him long ago on that perfect spring night in the garden of the Polish embassy. He remembered how the same arbiter of the law, honest, constant and sincere, according to his lights, once had changed his so potent and decisive opinion between dusk and dawn, and how by that sudden shifting of attitude democracy's income tax had been thrown into the dust bin of just legislation.

Bound, then, in one man's skull, might beat the thought, tossed like an irrevocable shuttle in its loom, that was to determine the fate of his people's children. Inexorable the loom, fashioned by the past and its prejudices and its passions, irrevocable the shuttle having once woven its thread into the warp of the intricate pattern of the law! And of those others shall it not be said that they were human, therefore fallible too, swayed by the prejudgments and the class consciousness of those to whom they owe birth, education and power, as unable to represent abstract justice as democracy to phrase it!

And so democracy, brooding there until its thoughts became as swarthy as its countenance, reflected that the nine fates that speak the ultimate word for our modern prosaic law of commerce have echoed in the long run the public opinion of the country. But that public opinion, fallible as its interpreters, is often wrong, tyrannical, bigoted in its attitude toward the questions that concern the people of

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Bruce. But when the fixed stars move to their places, shall not the mariners be guided by the light they throw, and shall not the sons of men direct their course by the radiant beacon-light of public opinion? Though the common sense of to-day be not the common sense of to-morrow, and the mundane lights shift and bewilder, what matters it? Follow while they shine and whither they direct!

"Since this court speaks the final word for things as they are," said Bruce to himself, the blue light of inspiration creeping athwart his glittering gray eyes, "and things as they are are wrong to the core of them, what is there left for democracy to do, if it would save itself, but to work a complete change in the structure erected by the labor of its hands and the sweat of its brow?"

Thus solving its own problem for itself, democracy grew lighter of heart and took a human interest in the human comedy, watching the calm guardians of the nation's destiny as they lend an indifferent ear to the argument of the celebrated counsel, yawning, turning over papers, glancing perfunctorily at legal documents, as if their minds were already made up concerning the merits of the case, or rather as if they wished to keep their thoughts impartial and in suspense until they could hold a more leisurely and profound converse with the written word.

Celebrated counsel for Mammon drawled on and on; Bruce, quite as weary of legal platitude as the nine august and potent judges, permitted himself to yawn like them; and his mind afar, traveled from the dull prelude detached from the play to the dénouement to come, and wondered if modern justice refused to sanction his Child-Labor bill what modern charity would do for the children of his people.

CHAPTER XVIII

SHACKLED

IN the room of the Committee of Military Affairs, eleven senators were massing their wits to frame a bill that would give the militia power to cope with any emergency an unreliable hour might bring forth. Hard times frowned down on the country again, and labor, used to better things, roared at the taking away of its fleshpot and menaced industry after industry with strike after strike.

Commerce, hard pushed, was crying out bitterly for stern measures. Labor was refusing to enroll in the State military organizations, and already the chiefs of railroad brotherhoods were locking horns with presidents, and the coal miners, lifting listless shovels, were hearkening for the call to quit work. A social upheaval threatened to overthrow industry unless the voice of authority stopped it before impassioned rebellion got well under way.

To history — proud may we be of the conquest — belongs now the Public Military law that made every able-bodied citizen a member of the militia and the militia itself an auxiliary of the national army. Let history then pronounce the verdict and pass the comment, here only we record what has escaped her blazoned rolls and belongs to her vulgar and loquacious handmaid, oral tradition.

The vulgar one tells us that on a certain Thursday morning there appeared before the committee composed of wool and of cotton, of mines, law and railroads, a hard-headed

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son of toil, sent hither to protest against the bill in the name of his class. This Caliban, short, fat-armed, black-bearded, salaamed to commerce's senators, gazing on him coldly as the commodities they personified and fastening his blue eyes on Bruce McAllister, hated by trade, he hurled bitter words against the bill, his short arms gesticulating vehement hatred.

He summoned imagination to his aid and bade the senators travel with him to Rome, where the crude fellow had the impudence to ask history herself to illustrate and enrich his arguments. To such a pass has arrant democracy forced us nowadays!

"The slaves," spake he, "in one of the provinces of this ancient Rome conspire to set themselves free. To consummate their purpose they agree to break the laws, to burn down the fortresses of their masters, even to shed blood if need be. It is, of course, the duty of the captain of Cæsar's legions to slaughter this revolting rabble. And yet, looking backward, we ask had he the moral right to kill those warring for the liberty nature gave them? Well, to-day having won political and religious liberty our wage slaves rise to war for economic equality. Will the laws of humanity, greater than the laws of the Cæsars, sanction our shooting them down?"

"Anarchy!" was the senators' indignant response; and refused further argument the militant son of toil angrily sought the arched doors. Then spoke McAllister, who had sat in deep quiet, his knees pressed tightly against the edge of the mahogany table.

He abhorred force and the baying dogs it let loose and he arraigned the crushing of a strike by mere force of arms. A strike was a symptom, not a disease, and the aim of society should be to cure the disease, not to eradicate the symptom by sheer brutality.

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Thus he spoke, argument and counter-argument gleaming like blades now, and his opponents crossed hot swords with him, striving to leave him weaponless.

The battle, uninteresting, maybe, for those who had no part in it, went on fiercer and fiercer until Fiske spoke in quivering voice and then all were hushed, paying heed to the words of Nestor, left spiritless and broken-hearted by his daughter's death. White-haired, thin and stooped, infirm of gait, he was a changed man. Even Shaw, sitting there, was almost moved to tears by the voice of the erstwhile powerful Fiske, shadowy as if it had come from the sepulchral realms of death whither he was about to depart. With him now Sydney yearned to make his peace.

Fiske's piping voice proclaimed that both capital and labor must be awakened to a higher consciousness of their duties; and meanwhile, since it was ordained that there were to be rich and poor, laborer and master in the world, the Government must preserve peace between the two. Law and order must be maintained at all costs! After the saying of this he lapsed into quiet, his big head sinking slowly toward his breast.

Our hero declared that the pristine gods Law and Order had no more ardent worshiper than he, only their altar fires must not be fed with the substance and the life blood of his people.

Out flashed controversy's swords again, aimed as one against our hero's heart, and he, aweary of the unequal fray, retreated from the field silent and gloomy. He felt separated as widely from the others as if continents held them apart; and as we feel so do we think, and his way of feeling was not their way, and he never could prevail upon them to mete out justice to his people, who were not their people.

A sense of utter aloofness weighed him down. What

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availed the struggle? Victory was impossible unless he surrendered his captaincy over the humble and ranged himself on the side of the mighty. Victory turned into defeat, defeat after defeat, and even his own signal victory itself proclaimed his hopes so many dupes. Could not he use his energies and gifts to a better purpose than squandering them in prodigal wastefulness here? His soul, taking flight elsewhere, far beyond the confines of that room, brought him his answer; and he sat there heedless of what went on around him, deaf to all words, the gray gradually dying out of his eyes and leaving them a vivid blue.

Shortly after twelve, the work of drafting the bill almost accomplished, yawning, worn out with the stress of fatiguing emotions, Bruce was walking with slow, heavy steps through the basement corridors when he suddenly encountered little Butler.

"I've been looking for you, Bruce," said the correspondent excitedly.

"What's up, Ed?" he asked, wondering what meant his friend's agitation.

"I'm sorry to tell you—I know how you'll feel about it—but I thought you'd be anxious to hear. You mustn't ask me how I found out, but I've learned that the Supreme Court is going to kill your Anti Child-Labor bill. A clause in it has been found unconstitutional."

"Hm! You don't say! Well, I can't pretend that I'm exactly surprised," he choked out in a voice that told but too plainly how thin after all was the buffer preparation had put between him and his disappointment.

Curtly, unceremoniously, he left Butler, almost as if forgetful of his presence, and with step still slower and more heavy he moved up the curving bronze stairway to the lobby that led to the chamber.

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He paused suddenly, coming to a standstill before the door that gave on the Senate, as if the thought that had inspired him were a hand put forth to hold him back. "I'm not going in there to be shackled again," he said to himself solemnly. "Free and unfettered, I'm going to take my cause out on a fair field before the people."

Slowly he walked out into the corridor toward the elevator, his head bent, his hands clasped behind him, and he narrowly averted bumping into the graceful Sydney P. Shaw, strolling along in his easy, confident way. "Coming back for the afternoon session, McAllister?" asked Shaw, deferential to Bruce since the last episode in the Senate.

"I guess not," replied Bruce with a melancholy look that Shaw never forgot; "I've just concluded that it isn't fair to take up space on the ballroom floor if you can't dance."

CHAPTER XIX

SIR ANTHONY RIDES TO THE RESCUE

RUMOR, presaging the truth, as it does now and then when it takes the notion, busied itself spreading through Washington stories to the effect that Mr. Hammersmith stood in danger of financial ruin. His unfortunate investment in Shaw's Excelsior Developing Company had dragged him to the brink of bankruptcy some time ago, but he had managed by the assistance of friends and his own clever manipulation to draw away from that perilous situation. But now the hard times and the panic were hollowing out the value of his other securities and holdings, and the foundation of his fortune threatened to tumble and drag down with a crash the entire structure erected on it.

A quiet, self-sacrificing man, heroic in his modest way, his whole life had been given up practically to satisfying the wants of his family, and even now his last thought was for himself. He had speculated with their money and if they should blame him severely for it, he would complain of no injustice in the reproach.

He always had kept his affairs to himself, never caring to bother his wife with the dry details of business, but now circumstances compelled him to tell her all. Both did their best to hide their worries behind a mien of outer content. Mrs. Hammersmith proved equal to the effort; but as the outlook grew more and more dismal, the fortitude of one

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day was undermined by the increasing bad news of the next, and he moved through the house, glum, silent, dark of visage.

Nothing is more difficult than to keep the secret that we have a secret; for the very effort to which we go to hide our knowledge soon weaves a telling atmosphere of its own around us. Inez, putting together what she saw now and what she had learned before, reached a dismal but none the less truthful conclusion.

Slowly and for a long time the conviction had been growing on her that all this wealth and magnificence had not dropped like manna from the skies, but that work and care and anxiety had provided the rich furnishing for the stage on which she had acted a part that seemed unworthy of her now. Her father had been, it dawned on her, like a stage carpenter who had designed and made the rich setting wherein others might appear to their best advantage and in which he himself, the appurtenances once being fashioned, took small pleasure. Her thought for herself was altogether submerged in her worry for others and she was occupied solely in devising means that might lighten their burdens.

The change in Inez was not sudden. The century plant bursts into bloom in a single night; but, behold! through all the long laborious years every cell and fibre of the whole organism has been toiling, silent and unseen, each contributing its mite, like the bee to its hive, toward building up the flower that is in one night so suddenly to burgeon forth. And so with Inez, unguessed, unseen, unknown, the events, the thoughts, the experiences of the last years had been storing up in her soul all the different and varied elements that combined with such seeming suddenness in this one hour to bring forth the fine flower of her unselfishness.

And all through that long period of suspense and trial Inez recalled often what Bruce had said to her about the

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fear of want. She never had dreamed that his words could have any warm personal bearing for her, that they could plead afterwards like a voice in her ear; and now the specter he had painted so vividly was stalking boldly in the parlor below, mayhap was frowning in the bedroom where her father and mother lay, unable to sleep, frightened by the rash intrusion of the forbidding phantom. The personal factor again changed the meaning of Bruce's preachment for her. It struck home as a fact; it stood no longer aloof as a theory wherein a sated intellect might find the sensation of new pleasures. Self-interest which may kindle its light at the vestal fires of love, faithfulness and the highest devotion, is the star by which life guides the vessel of self, and as the star shifts so must its course vary.

However, the hand of an unseen good fortune stayed the blow that Inez's imagination pictured as struck in advance, for at the moment when all seemed the blackest Sir Anthony rode to the rescue. Sir Anthony's right hand did many things that his left hand never knew, nor was this, as some of his harsh critics would have us believe, because he wished to keep the respect of that member.

If business was business to Sir Anthony, friendship was friendship, and to what friends he had he could be both generous and magnanimous—there are those who say he had no friends at all. They were mistaken; his stanchness to Mr. Hammersmith proved it. When things were at their worst and Addison, taking counsel with his mother, laid the truth of the situation before his future father-in-law, Anthony scolded that artless youth for the hazardous delay, and he was as quick and ready to loan Mr. Hammersmith the use of his money as ninety-nine people out of every hundred would have been to lend him—their sympathy and advice.

And so dark rumors that passed current as good coin of

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the realm in Washington gossip were withdrawn shortly after they were put in circulation, but not before our hero had been disturbed by them. The thought of the beautiful Inez impoverished, saddened him, and yet out of that very sadness, as a flower may spring up in a ruin, there was born the hope that their union might be founded on her shattered fortunes and his own. The feeling that one whom he loved with all his being might hold him responsible for her reverses added nothing to his comfort of heart or his peace of mind. He knew that he could find surcease from pain only in her presence, and the rumor scarcely had reached him when he was found awaiting her in the library where the malevolent sprite, happily absent now, had turned his world topsyturvy. A sense of coolness pervaded the room. The light filtered in softly through the high, long, stained-glass windows, and the green rug and the subdued tones of wall and curtain and furnishing were grateful to one who just had passed through the glaring heat outside.

Time was when the regal magnificence of this house had thrust invisible barriers between him and her, for whom it served as a fitting background for her queenliness; but gradually the surroundings had receded farther and farther from dominance as his imagination lifted her triumphantly above them. She had sanctified them as her so benign presence would have sanctified any place where she happened to be, and even downright democracy, evoking her beautiful image out of the host of suggestions of her with which every corner of the room was redolent, found even its overburdening luxuries dear. A quickened heartbeat announced her coming.

Her brown eyes, love-lit, fastened on him. "Why, how worn you look," surprise prompted her to say.

Her sympathy touched him like a tender caress. "It's

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one of the little perquisites of politics," he smiled. Endearing words hung a-tremble on his lips; the call of the blood in him was strong and he gathered all his strength to resist the temptation to proclaim his passion for her, to fold her, protest though she might, in his arms. By sheer force he made love stand in abeyance while duty spun the fine web of its argument.

Dexterously he turned the conversation away from his own trials to hers, hinting as lightly as he could that the defeat of the Shaw bill might be responsible for the failure of the house of Hammersmith.

She smiled on him, the love-light flitting across her limpid brown eyes. "We were more fortunate than others"—she flew to the distress she divined—"and I believe my father's investment leaves him little to regret."

"I am glad of it; heartily glad." A broad smile played across the long lips of his mouth, bespeaking his relief, then his face shadowed perceptibly again. Love, growing faint of heart, rent him.

Her whole spirit, all her being moved toward him, was shocked by the peculiar change of expression that shadowed his swarthy face and stood at gaze to wonder at it.

"Glad, that is, beyond measure for your sake; sorry for mine," he answered, reading her wonderment. Passion rising, rising, threatened to whirl over the dam built by his restraint and carry him away with its barriers.

She looked a question, bending toward him, her warm fragrant breath on his cheek.

His words rushed to his lips torrentwise, then he checked himself and spoke with seeming deliberateness: "I thought to approach you on a basis of equality. I thought I would come to you and make what I have your own. I had position then, a future—I offered them once to you and——"

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"And I challenged your sincerity, I know; but have I regretted anything more since than my perfect unreasonableness?"

"But now"—he hesitated, looking at her as if to garner the word of permission to go on.

Her breast heaved, pink colored her ivory cheeks, a soft expression in her brown eyes signaled him to risk all nor be afraid. He advanced.

"But now I find you, secure as you were, put beyond the fear of want, while I—I have lost what little you might have valued." He looked at her beseechingly, longingly, as if life itself had passed from him into her hands and she were the arbiter of its future.

"Enlighten me. I am quite in the dark," she entreated gently. She took him metaphorically.

"I have resigned from the Senate!"

"You have?"

"Yes, I sent my resignation last night to the governor."

"Why?" Astonishment took her from love's world to the less entrancing realm of affairs.

Feeling the change, he changed to meet it. "The pathos of wasted effort appalled me." His voice was the man's and not the lover's.

"And when?" Her admiration for his strength and power of conviction swept her back to the world out of which she had passed.

"It has been with me since the beginning, when they tried to ridicule me out of my ideals."

"And so made themselves ridiculous!"

"From our point of view, maybe, not from theirs. I eluded every snare they spread under my feet: women, money, place. And even where a man's heart is softest, even when

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they tried to win me by offering my brother Peter a coveted position, I could refuse."

"Strongest of men," she murmured admiringly, the words half spoken to herself, half to him.

He nodded, carried beyond himself as it were, beyond her by the confession he was bent on making. "They maligned me; they spread false reports about me. They did all in their power to ruin me politically. They charged me publicly and privately with being a demagogue and a charlatan. But that is the usual course through which sincerity must run, and I took it for granted, heeding it hardly at all."

"And then I, too, came to tempt you," burst in Inez warmly. She arose from her chair and stood beside him. She had been moved and thrilled strangely by what he said in his own behalf—said like one who would put under his feet the sum of his past accomplishments with a just pride merely that he may climb by way of them to greater heights and still bigger victories. It was to her as if his own lips had attempted to render him the praise he deserved and failed in their task through timidity or modesty.

"Would you make little of that last temptation?" she asked, after a pause, lovingly, her eyes bent full on him, all the woman in her challenged.

"If that last temptation had come first I might have given way to it; but I became stronger as I went along," he smiled, it seemed to her as through tears; and in his rugged ugliness she discovered him handsome.

"No, no, don't say that!" she pleaded ardently, passionately; "I won't let you say that! You are too modest in your own behalf. You would always have been honest, I know." It was as if she were daring all the world, not him, to pronounce otherwise.

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"I am glad you approve of what I have done, Inez, dearest," he returned, the endearment slipping from him before he was aware, taking advantage of his devotion to his utterance. He paused, half expecting reproof; she offered none. "I feared you might consider it a straining after the heroic," he went on. "I don't want to appear as a self-made martyr; I wished only to do what I thought was the upright and manly thing to do."

"Blame you! I blame you, Bruce McAllister? I seek words to express the admiration I feel for you! I doubted you once—it is right that I acknowledge it—and I wonder how I could have done so now." She felt the blood beat at the blue veins in her temples, her breath come slow, her spirit rush to his once more.

"We have both to ask forgiveness of the past, Inez, and the past ought to grant it—it has made us suffer so."

"I have been very hard and very cruel," she said contritely, her eyes finding his and resting there as if from him she would not, if she could, remove her gaze. For him, in love's conceit, she symbolized his past, all time gone and all to come. "I will be so no more." She was abashed and humbled by his presence and she could express her feeling of inferiority only by dwelling on the superior heights to which she insisted he had attained.

"I am thankful," she ended, her words surcharged with affection, with sincerity, "that even our day had its heroes and that I, so unworthy, have been privileged to know one of them. You believe me, don't you, won't you?"

She felt the ebb and flow of her blood coursing through her veins and she wavered toward him, her body swaying as if passion-tossed. He would have been stone blind not to have read the love that was written, nay, that was carved, on her glowing countenance.

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His long arms spread out, sweeping toward her, and he said, the words long contained suddenly bursting from him, "I love you, Inez dearest," and she sank into them, sobbing. So falls dawn into the arms of day, easily, as nature, the mother of us all, orders it. Her head rested on his breast, heeding not the aid of his tenderly directing hand; their lips touched and their spirits became as one.

CHAPTER XX

CROSSING THE RUBICON

A SMALL but strong minority of the legislature of Illinois, then, in session, fought hard against the acceptance of Bruce McAllister's resignation from the Senate. However slight, it was still a much greater evidence of popular favor than Bruce had expected. Rightly he concluded that unfavorable winds had not blown on arid soil all the seeds of his sowing. His words, spreading far, must have availed somewhat and found response somewhere. His heart was lifted beyond the reach of despondency, and he believed more fervently than ever that the years, no matter how begrudgingly, must yield inevitably to the justice of his cause. Hope deferred will make even the lion-hearted sick, and the faith that the future would fulfil his desire had come at a moment when it was most needed.

Inez rejoiced with him, converted heart and soul to his tenets, inspired by his message for humanity. She was ready to range herself at his side though all the rest of the world stood against them. A two-fold cord of love bound her to the man and his doctrines. She was stepping out of her environment, away from her class; but the separation from what had become unsatisfying caused her to shed no tears. The light had come to her after a long struggle, and she was too goodly stubborn to turn back into the darkness, she was willing to leave an objecting father and a disappointed moth-

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er to follow him; but when they came to an understanding of her resoluteness they scarcely could do otherwise than acquiesce in her choice, and so Bruce and Inez, who planned a quiet marriage in Chicago, were to depart with the paternal and maternal blessing that has passed from convention into proverb.

In accordance with the arrangements hit upon as best by Bruce and Addison, Inez, together with her mother and father, was to return to Chicago on the same train with Bruce, Peter, and Elaine; and on the morning chosen for the departure, the McAllisters stood on the platform of the Pennsylvania depot waiting anxiously for the Hammersmiths to put in their appearance. Peter absorbed as usual with a vexatious problem in chemistry, strode up and down quickly, unmindful of the morning's blistering heat, of the roll of the trunk trucks, the bawling of the conductors, the clang and clatter of moving engines and cars. Although there was nothing in his demeanor to show it, Peter's heart too was big with hope, for he had been offered a professorship in one of the far Western universities, and at last there was promised him the leisure necessary for the working out of his revolutionary theories.

Bruce himself was anxious, oddly nervous, keeping a sharp lookout for the Hammersmiths and Inez, fearful lest some unexpected accident disrupt his fondly laid plans and do—he scarcely dared to tell himself what. Elaine too, was looking for somebody, and her sharp eyes gleamed through her spectacles and fastened on the high iron fence through the gates of which people were passing in and out the noisy depot. Had the preoccupation of either brother been less, it might have been noticed that the cause of some unwonted excitement was suffusing Elaine's pale face with a glow of color. It struck her, as she gazed around, that a picture of life in

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little was presented by the railway depot, with its constant goings and comings, its separation and union of friends, its mingling of sad and happy faces, the uncertainties and the varied fortunes that awaited those who entered or left its portals. Her own hopes for this very morning, her own fearfulness of its outcome exaggerated the tragic or comic side of every incident that she observed. Bruce's nervousness increased her own; and she clutched his arm in a way that would have awakened his surprise ordinarily.

"There she comes!" sang out Bruce suddenly, spying Addison and Inez at the gate, followed by their mother and father. He rushed forward to meet her, leaving Elaine where she stood.

"Had you given me up?" asked Inez smiling.

"Not anywhere so near as six months ago," he answered.

Elaine and Peter kept to one side timidly, neither quite used as yet to their sister-in-law to be, and rather constrained by her presence. Addison with characteristic good nature and activity tried his level best to put the McAllisters at ease with the Hammersmiths.

"I'm mighty glad that Bruce is going to come into our family. I always felt toward him like a brother anyway. I don't know which is the luckier, Bruce or Inez," he said to Peter and Elaine, not once but twenty times.

And then taking Bruce to one side, and engaging him in a conversation, he eased his overladen heart by pouring forth his troubles in that most sympathetic of ears. "Things were all right to begin with, Bruce," ran his plaint, "but only the other day Mr. Wyckoff told me that he expected me to pitch in and work like the mischief the moment I get married to Ruth. He has the idea that I am no better than a clerk and he insists on taking me to New York to break me in. He seems to think that eight or ten hours a day at

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the grindstone would be good for my health. And the worst of it is that my own parents and Inez agree with him. I dread it. But what can I do about it now? I like him and yet I'm afraid of him—I don't know just why, but he looks at you with his little eyes and rolls out what he wants done in his deep voice and you've got to say that you'll do it."

Meanwhile, Inez, noticing Elaine's timidity, twined her arm around her waist affectionately and said: "We won't have much time to be sisterly in Washington, so let us improve these few minutes."

The two young women were chatting together pleasantly when Elaine caught sight of R. R. shambling along with an eager, expectant countenance, and blushing she ran forward to call to him. He grinned recognition in his habitual manner, and thrust out his ridge of brow. Under his arm, peeping bashfully from their covering of torn tissue paper, he carried a bouquet of roses of which he seemed thoroughly ashamed, for he thrust them back farther and reddened the moment he saw Elaine's companion. "Didn't know this was to be a society event," he muttered to himself.

"I've been hunting all over for you," he growled on joining Elaine. "I've gone the rounds of the depot about a thousand times. I've hunted high and low for you. I thought you would be in the waiting room and I looked for you there. Finally I came out here and then the fool gate-man put me on the wrong track. I suppose these roses are all withered to pieces. They ought to be; it serves you about right for making me stand on my head like this. Come down to the end of the train and I'll give them to you—there's no need of your brothers' seeing, it's none of their business, is it? Everybody in Washington is hanging around whenever I want to do anything—except to sell a picture." He stopped, panting for breath, and mopped the sweat that

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stood out on his short neck. His collar was limp, wringing with the wet.

"Don't scold, R. R.," laughed Elaine, "we've only got three minutes more." In truth she was as pleased to hear him grumble as to say aught else—it mattered not so long as he was there, confining his attention to her.

"Only three minutes! Well, it's not my fault; I calculated on twenty-five. Ha! I left the book I brought for you—the 'Life of Rembrandt'—in that confounded waiting room. I'll run and get it. No, I won't; I'll let it go; it's your punishment for keeping me on pins and needles. I'll express it to you."

"Yes, don't go back for it. The train might pull out before you return." Her eyes were fairly drinking him in, swallowing him bodily.

"I'll miss you awfully. But what's the use of repeating that again! Washington won't be the same any more. I hate the thought of going back to the building and finding you gone. I—I—I"—he stopped, stammered and blushed, and Elaine blushed with him, feeling herself on the verge of tears, not daring to choke out a word.

"I'm all upside down this morning," he puffed out. "I don't know what's wrong; it's the heat, I guess. In fact, I know it's the heat." He glared at her as if he defied her to say otherwise."

"All aboard!" shouted the conductor.

Elaine extended her hand to him, in voluble silence for the last time. Bruce called to her, waving his long arm, Elaine turned. Rossiter Rembrandt stood looking at her with mouth agape, his hat pushed far back on his head, his ridge of brow projecting like a missile. A gloomy picture of the musty studio, of his going back there and flinging himself down on the lounge and crying out for sheer loneliness,

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flashed across his mind. He saw down a vista of dreary days and forsaken months. All that made life precious to him was going away on that train. "And such a little bit of a woman!" he gasped.

Addison was waving his handkerchief in farewell, Bruce and Inez had left the platform. The bell clanged; the conductor shouted; the wheels turned slowly, with a grinding noise; the engine puffed and the train was off.

"I'm an ape! I'm an idiot! I'm an ass!" yelled R. R. "I'm a pearl-gray ass, a cross between the domestic and the wild kind. By God, she ain't agoing; I won't let her go." He ran forward at full speed, pulling his fat body along, puffing madly for breath, his feet falling with a thump like that of iron. He all but whisked Addison off the ground and barely missed colliding with a hand truck. The spectators doubled with laughter at the adipose, puffing R. R. in his wild race for the train. His hat fell off, but he did not as much as waste a motion to recover it. The colored porter yelled at him, the Pullman conductor motioned him off, but heedless of all warning, he grabbed the nickel railing, hung on for dear life, and they lifted him on. He stood on the step for a second, very red in the face, turned his back, and grinning triumphantly at the impudent ones who had dared to laugh at him, shook his fist.

Elaine, who witnessed part of the strange performance from the vestibule, covered her face with her hands, dumfounded, afraid to look, expecting the next minute to hear R. R.'s dying groan as the feelingless car wheels passed over his crushed body. She was ready to question her eyes when he stood before her, hatless, dirty, puffing for breath, the sweat streaming down from his ridge of brow like water after a rain from the roof.

"I risked my life for you," he gasped. "I came within

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an ace of getting killed. See here, I want you to marry me."

"Oh, R. R., what made you do such a foolhardy thing? You frightened me numb. Don't you ever dare do anything like that again!"

"I never will," he grinned, "if you will marry me to see that I can't."

"I don't see how I can help it under the circumstances, you funny, dear R. R."

Inside the car, oblivious of what a difference the last few minutes had made in the life of his sister, Bruce sat beside Inez, gazing out of the window on the city slowly disappearing from sight. The water of the Potomac rolled golden under the glaring sun. Even now the capital was taking on the crowded appearance of a birds-eye view, the burnished and white domes of the Library and Capitol, the graceful shaft of the Monument standing out alone, clear-cut and well defined, forming centers about which the jumble of long streets, verdant tree tops and red brick buildings huddled together and dwindled away.

Even so in Bruce's mind were tangled and confused the innumerable incidents that made up his life in Washington, the hard trials, and the suffering and the agony of those long years, his smaller failures and lesser triumphs, the many battles he had fought for the principle sacred to him, the long nights given over to heartaches and pain, the few short days of happiness. One and all of these were growing smaller, receding from memory, merging their individuality in the mass that went to build up his impression of the past—a birds-eye view, too, a whole city of sensations, as it were, drawn in miniature; each separate joy and grief reduced to a dot; their intensity and vividness diminished and lessened to fit

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the final picture. And as the city of Washington was fading away faster and faster, the Monument and the dome of the Capitol looming out of the distance alone, like mountain peaks on a flat plain, so in Bruce's mind there loomed forth nothing but the inevitable triumph of his cause and the conquest of Inez.

He fastened his gaze on the Monument, its outlines merging in the surrounding atmosphere, and he turned to Inez to tell her again, as he had times without number, of the hard, rough road they would have to travel together, of the sacrifices she might be called upon to make daily, of the luxuries and comforts of the old life that she might miss. They were crossing the Rubicon now; there would be no return, and he spoke more feelingly, more tenderly on the theme than ever before.

Inez laughed his fears down. "I don't call that a sacrifice, Bruce, to give up nothing worth the while to get everything that is. I have a place and a purpose in life now. My aimless, empty—look!" she ended, as if the thought had seized her that second by surprise, "my faith was dying and you gave me a new religion."

"Well, I guess the trade was no more than fair," he said playfully, "see what you gave me."

The train whirled on, the plinth of the Monument receded to a point, scarcely distinguishable. The gray died out of his eyes, leaving them a deep dreamy blue. The vision came to him of a new Washington, to be transformed in spirit as thoroughly and as truly as the young architects and landscape artists of the day—those dreamers of beautiful dreams—were planning to remodel the body of the city in which the soul dwelt. Might the spiritual and physical change come together! It would then be no longer a city of swaggering negations, but one of positive accomplishments,

CROSSING THE RUBICON

equal to its magnificent opportunities, not lagging far behind when it should lead and direct. A city of all cities, majestic, commanding, serene, the glory of America, the sparkling jewel in the girdle of capitals that clasped the earth; the new Athens of a dawning state, roofed and pinnacled, painted and carved by the joyous arts and the vital crafts that the wand of another civilization would call into being; the Rome of the future, throbbing with big purposes, thundering mandates for peace and good will across the seas, the deserts and the mountains; its fashioning hand felt in every clime. No longer the city of despair for him who wended his way thither with noble aspirations for the brotherhood of man, but the city of hope—the true capital of the coming democracy of the morrow.

“The new religion!”—Inez’s words burst on him in their full content. Hand in hand the new democracy would walk toward fulfillment with the new religion. The old creeds were tottering fast to their final decay, failing to satisfy, unable to circle the changed concepts of men, standing outside of their daily lives and occupations, apart from the huge mechanism of production, sinking back as commerce and science swung forward to alter the face of the universe. The dead past had buried its dead, fertilizing the ground for the new harvest that was to give food to the hungry and wine for the weary in spirit.

It was a commonplace in the philosophy of history that when the economic system changed, the religion built thereon as a superstructure changed with it. And the competitive system had wrought its own doom, sounded the death knell to its sham and base ideals, its selfishness, its greed, its cult of the purse, its cruelty, its fostering by necessity of crime and corruption, its enslavement of those who toiled by those who profited, its strident insistence on the inequality of men,

THE RADICAL

its struggle of the classes. What meant the restlessness and stirring about of all mankind, the crying out with dissatisfaction at the present *régime*, other than that the ideals of humanity had evolved to higher things, that the new religion was in the making, that competition must yield to coöperation, even as feudalism and serfdom had given way to a new civilization which now, in its turn, was dropping behind in the march of progress, in the epic movement of the peoples in the pathway of the suns? It was all written down in the unsealed books of evolution, and plutocracy was powerless to stem the tide that swept on with the lift of the seven seas, joyfully carrying all the nations of the earth toward the new democracy.

The train curved on its tracks, the capital disappeared from Bruce's view. Inez touched his hand as if to remind him reprovingly of her presence.

"Of what have you been thinking all this time, John of Dreams?" she asked.

"I've been pondering over the fact," he answered with a chuckle, "that the White House had a wise designer. It just struck me that it has both a front and a back door."

Perhaps it had been a part of his day-dream that he was fated before many years to return to the City of Hope, sent thither to preside over its finer destinies by the voice of the people that was calling him away from Washington now; otherwise what rhyme or reason was there in his ambiguous reply?

(1)

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